



A Companion to Josephus

**Chapman, Honora
Howell; Rodgers,
Zuleika;
Zuleika Rodgers**

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JOSEPHUS

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John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Notes on Contributors

Eran Almagor is the author of papers and articles on Strabo, Plutarch's *Lives*, Greeks and barbarians, Achaemenid Persia, Ctesias and the reception of antiquity in modern popular culture. He is the co-editor of *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (2013).

John Barclay is Lightfoot Professor of Divinity at Durham University. He is the author of the latest English translation and commentary on Josephus's *Against Apion* (Brill Josephus Project) (2007); he has written on *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (1996) and has published a number of essays and articles on Josephus.

Albert I. Baumgarten is Professor Emeritus of Jewish History at Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel. He is the author of *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (1997) as well as of numerous articles on ancient Jewish sectarianism. His most recent book is *Elias Bickerman as a Historian of the Jews: A Twentieth Century Tale* (2010).

Helen K. Bond is Senior Lecturer in New Testament and Director of the Centre for the Study of Christian Origins at Edinburgh University. She is the author of *The Historical Jesus: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2012), *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (2004), and *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (1998).

Silvia Castelli, MA in Classics (1997) and PhD in Jewish Studies (2001), has been Assistant Professor of Ancient History at the University of Trento (2005–2009), and is currently a PhD researcher in New Testament Studies (18th-century Textual Criticism) at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. She is author of an Italian translation and commentary of Book 3 of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* (2002), as well as of several articles on Josephus's work and its reception.

Honora Howell Chapman, PhD Stanford, is Professor of Classics and Humanities at California State University, Fresno, USA. She is a contributing author to the Brill Josephus Project for Books 2 and 5 of *Judean War* and served as co-chair of the Josephus Seminar/Group of the Society of Biblical Literature for nine years.

Saskia Dönitz is a Research Assistant at the Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie, Freie Universität Berlin, and a post-doctoral researcher at the Seminar für Judaistik, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt.

Erich S. Gruen is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was Gladys Rehard Wood Professor of History and

Classics. Among his books are *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (1998), *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (2002), and *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (2012).

Gohei Hata is Professor Emeritus at Tama Art University in Tokyo. His ninety publications include the translation into Japanese of the works of Josephus, Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*, Philo's *Against Flaccus* and *Embassy to Gaius*, and Philostratus's *Apollonius of Tyana*. He is now preparing a Japanese translation of the Septuagint. Recently a Visiting Fellow of Clare Hall and of Wolfson College, Cambridge, he is currently a Visiting Fellow at Yale University.

Tal Ilan is Professor of Jewish Studies at the Freie University in Berlin. In addition to her work on the general history of Late Antiquity, her research focuses on gender issues in rabbinic literature and the Hebrew Bible, and in the field of Jewish onomastics. She is the author of *Integrating Jewish Women into Second Temple History* (1999) and *Silencing the Queen: The Literary Histories of Shelamzion and Other Jewish Women* (2006).

Sabrina Inowlocki is the author of *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors* (2006), *Reconsidering Eusebius* (2011), and various articles on ancient Jewish and Christian literature. She is currently an independent researcher.

David A. Kaden received his PhD from the University of Toronto and is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College. His PhD on "Law and Power: Matthew, Paul, and the Anthropology of Law" will appear in the WUNT II series published by Mohr Siebeck.

Richard Kalmin is Theodore R. Racoosin Professor of Rabbinic Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on the interpretation of rabbinic stories, ancient Jewish history, and the structure and development of rabbinic literature. Among his books are *Jewish Babylonia Between Persia and Roman Palestine* (2006) and he is currently working on a book for the University of California Press entitled *Migrating Tales: Judaism, Christianity, and Stories in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity*.

Karen M. Kletter is Associate Professor of History at Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA. The main focus of her present work is medieval historiography and the intellectual context of Jewish-Christian relations.

Kate Leeming (Adcock) studied Classics and then researched medieval translations from Greek to Arabic at Oxford University. She co-edited the Slavonic Version of Josephus's *Jewish War* with Henry Leeming (Brill 2003). Her paper on Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk's reading of Josephus is available on the AHRC Josephus project website. She is an organist, music teacher, and Assistant Editor of *ARA*, the Bulletin of the Association for

Roman Archaeology.

Tommaso Leoni teaches Greek and Roman history at York University, Toronto. He has published articles on Josephus in journals such as *Ostraka*, the *Journal of Jewish Studies*, *Athenaeum*, *La Parola del Passato*, *Materia giudaica*, *Latomus*, and the *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*. He is currently working on two different monographs, both devoted to the second Flavian emperor: one on Titus's use of the 'beneficial ideology,' the other on the lost triumphal arch dedicated in 81 C.E. commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem (*Urbem Hierusolymam delevit: The Arch of Titus in the Circus Maximus in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*).

David B. Levenson is University Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Religion Department at Florida State University, USA. His research focuses on early Jewish-Christian relations, the Emperor Julian, and the text of Josephus. He is currently engaged in preparing a commentary and translation for on Book 6 of the *Jewish War* with Thomas R. Martin for the Brill Josephus Project.

Thomas R. Martin is Jeremiah W. O'Connor Jr. Professor in Classics at Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, USA. His research focuses on Greek and Roman history, including numismatics. With David B. Levenson he is preparing a commentary on and translation of Book 6 of the *Jewish War* for the Brill Josephus Project.

Steve Mason, former Canada Research Chair in Greco-Roman Cultural Interaction at Toronto's York University, has recently moved to Groningen as Distinguished Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Cultures. Mason's books include *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (1991), *Josephus and the New Testament* (2003), and *Josephus, Judea, and Christian Origins: Methods and Categories* (2009). His most recent monograph, *A History of the Jewish War, 66–74*, is in production with Cambridge University Press. He edits the multi-volume series, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (Brill Josephus Project), to which he has contributed the volumes *Life of Josephus* and *Judean War 2*.

James S. McLaren is Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University, Sydney, Australia. He is the author of *Power and Politics in Palestine* (1991) and *Turbulent Times?* (1996), the editor of two books and has written numerous articles and book chapters on aspects of first-century Jewish and early Christian history. He is preparing the translation and commentary for Book 7 of the *Judean War* in the Brill Josephus Project.

David Nakman (Nachman) is the head of Ein Prat Academy for Leadership at Kfar Adumim, Israel, and teaches the history of Second Temple and Talmudic period at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem.

Maren R. Niehoff is Max Cooper Chair in Jewish Thought, Head of AMIRIM the interdisciplinary honors program in the Humanities, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. She has published extensively on Philo, Hellenistic Judaism, and on exegetical contacts between Jews, Greeks and early Christians. Among her publications are: *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship* (2011), *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (2001), and *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (1992).

Zuleika Rodgers, is Lecturer in Jewish Studies and Director of the Herzog Centre at Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland. She was President of the British Association for Jewish Studies (2013–2014).

Jonathan P. Roth is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and earned his PhD from Columbia University in 1991. A specialist in Roman military history and first-century Judaism, he is Professor of Ancient History at San Jose State University, earning its Outstanding Professor award in 2005. Roth is the author of two books, *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War* (1998) and *Roman Warfare* (2009) and numerous articles, chapter and reviews, as well as a 48-part video series on “War and World History” for the Teaching Company. He serves as the director of SJSU’s Burdick Military History Project and Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Program.

Daniel R. Schwartz is the Herbst Family Professor of Judaic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His work focuses on ancient Jewish history and historiography. Recently he has published *Reading the First Century: On Reading Josephus and Studying Jewish History of the First Century* (2013) and *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (2014). He is preparing *Antiquities* 18–20, translation and commentary, for the Brill Josephus Project.

Paul Spilsbury is Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Ambrose University College, Calgary, Canada. He is the author of *The Image of the Jew* (1998), *The Throne, the Lamb, and the Dragon* (2002), and co-author with Christopher Begg of *Judean Antiquities Books 8–10: Translation and Commentary* (2005) (Brill Josephus Project).

Jan Willem van Henten is Professor of Religion, in particular, Ancient Judaism and Ancient Christianity, and Director of the Graduate School of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He is also extraordinary Professor of Old and New Testament at Stellenbosch University. He is the author of *Martyrdom and Noble Death* (2002; with Friedrich Avemarie) and co-editor of *Powers: Religion as a Social and Spiritual Force* (2010; with Meerten ter Borg), and *Coping with Violence in the New Testament* (2012; with Pieter de Villiers). His Brill commentary on *Antiquities* 15, with a new translation, was published in 2014.

Zeev Weiss is the Eleazar L. Sukenik Professor of Archaeology at The

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. Trained in Classical Archaeology, he specializes in Roman and Late Antique art and architecture in the provinces of Syria-Palestine. He is the Director of the Sepphoris excavations on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His interests lie in various aspects of town-planning, architectural design, and mosaic art, as well as the evaluation of archaeological finds in light of the socio-cultural behavior of Jewish society and its dialogue with Greco-Roman culture and Christian cultures.

Alice Whealey has a BA in history from Stanford University, CA, and a PhD in History from the University of California, Berkeley, USA. In addition to her book, *Josephus on Jesus* (2003) and other writings about the *Testimonium Flavianum*, she has published articles on late antique Greek Christian texts, and on early Eastern Christian responses to Muslim conquest and rule of the former Roman Near East.

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Abbreviations

4QpNah	Cave 4, Qumran, <i>pesher</i> (commentary), Book of Nahum
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>Abraham</i>
<i>Abst.</i>	Porphyry, <i>On Abstinence</i>
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
<i>Aet.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Eternity [of the World]</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Judean Antiquities</i>
<i>Ant. rom.</i>	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Roman Antiquities</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	Lucian, <i>Apology [for the Dependent Scholar]</i>
<i>Att.</i>	Cicero, <i>Letters to Atticus</i>
<i>Aug., De civ. D.</i>	Augustine, <i>City of God</i>
b. Baba Batra	Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra (“The Last Gate”)
b. Sanhedrin	Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin (“Assembly”)
b. Ta’anit	Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit (“Tractate”)
b. Yoma	Babylonian Talmud, Yoma (“Day”)
<i>Bibl.</i>	Photius, <i>Bibliotheca (Library)</i>
BJP	Brill Josephus Project
<i>Brut.</i>	Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
Cassius Dio	Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	Sallust, <i>War with Catiline</i>
<i>C. Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Against Celsus</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Critical Editions of Christian Texts in Latin)
<i>Cic., Tusc. Disp.</i>	Cicero, <i>Tusculan Disputations</i>
Cod.	Codex
<i>Contr.</i>	Seneca the Elder, <i>Controversiae</i>

CSEL	(<i>Rhetorical Forensic Exercises</i>) Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Works of Church Fathers in Latin)
<i>De excidio</i>	Pseudo-Hegesippus, <i>De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae</i>
<i>De fort. Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>On the Fortune of the Romans</i>
<i>De orat.</i>	Cicero, <i>On the Orator</i>
<i>De ord. libr.</i>	Galen, <i>On the Order of My Own Books</i>
<i>Dem. evan.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Demonstration of the Gospel</i>
<i>De vir. ill.</i>	<i>On Illustrious Men</i> (Plutarch or Jerome)
<i>Dial.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Dialogue on Oratory</i>
Dio Chrys. <i>Or./Orr.</i>	Dio Chrysostom, <i>Oration/Orations</i>
Diog. Laert.	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers</i>
<i>Dom.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Domitian</i>
<i>El.</i>	Euripides, <i>Electra</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Martial, <i>Epigrams</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Pliny, <i>Epistles</i>
<i>Ep. ad Tryph.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Epistle to Trypho</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	Jerome, <i>Epistles</i>
<i>Epit.</i>	Justin, <i>Epitome</i>
<i>Fam.</i>	Cicero, <i>Letters to Friends</i>
FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (collected by Felix Jacoby)
<i>Flac.</i>	Philo, <i>Against Flaccus</i>
<i>Fr. in Lam.</i>	Origen, <i>Fragments of Commentary on Lamentations</i>
fragm.	fragment
<i>Her.</i>	Euripides, <i>Herakles</i>
<i>Heracl.</i>	Euripides, <i>Herakles' Children</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Histories</i> (Herodotus or Tacitus)
<i>Hist. conscr.</i>	Lucian, <i>How to Write History</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>History of the Church</i>
<i>Hyp.</i>	Philo, <i>Hypothetica</i>
<i>In Ctes.</i>	Aeschines, <i>Against Ctesiphon</i>
<i>In Lam.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentary on Lamentations</i>

<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutes of Oratory</i>
<i>Iul.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Julius Caesar</i>
Lat.	Latin (manuscript)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>Embassy (to Gaius)</i>
Lev	Leviticus
LXX	Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures)
<i>Mem.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia (Memoirs)</i>
<i>Mil.</i>	Vegetius, <i>Concerning Military Matters</i>
<i>Mor.</i> [<i>Praec.</i>]	Plutarch, <i>Moral Essays (Precepts [of Statecraft])</i>
<i>Mos</i>	Philo, <i>Moses</i>
<i>NH</i>	Pliny the Elder, <i>Natural History</i>
NT	New Testament
<i>Oed. Rex</i>	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Creation [of the World]</i>
<i>Or.</i>	Dio Chrysostom, <i>Orations</i>
<i>Orr.</i>	<i>Orations</i>
<i>Paneg.</i>	Pliny, <i>Panegyric</i>
<i>Part. or.</i>	Cicero, <i>On Oratorical Partitions</i>
PG	Patrilogia Graeca (Writings of the Church Fathers in Greek)
<i>Phoen.</i>	Euripides, <i>Phoenician Women</i>
PL	Patrilogia Latina (Writings of the Church Fathers in Latin)
Plut.	Plutarch
Plut., <i>Cat. M.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Cato the Elder</i>
Plut., <i>Dem.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Demosthenes</i>
<i>Poet</i>	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>
praef.	preface
<i>Praep. evan.</i>	Eusebius's <i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
<i>Pro Rosc.</i>	Cicero, <i>For Sextus Roscius of Ameria</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	Philo, <i>[Every] Good Man [is Free]</i>
r	recto (front side of a manuscript)
<i>Rhet. praec.</i>	Lucian, <i>A Professor of Public Speaking</i>
<i>Rom. or.</i>	Aelius Aristides, <i>Roman Oration</i>

<i>Sat.</i>	Juvenal, <i>Satires</i>
<i>Silv.</i>	Statius, <i>Silvae</i>
<i>Spec. Laws</i>	Philo, Special Laws
<i>Suas.</i>	Seneca the Elder, <i>Suasoriae</i> (<i>Rhetorical Persuasive Exercises</i>)
<i>Tit.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Titus</i>
<i>Troi.</i>	Euripides, <i>Trojan Women</i>
v	verso (back side of a manuscript)
Vat.	Vatican
<i>Verr.</i>	Cicero, <i>Against Verres</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Vespasian</i>
<i>Vir ill.</i>	Jerome, <i>On Illustrious Men</i>
<i>Virtues</i>	Philo, <i>On the Virtues</i>
VS	Philostratus, <i>Lives of the Sophists</i>
Werd	manuscript: Berlin lat. 226
y. Yoma	Palestinian Talmud, Yoma (“Day”)

Introduction

Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers

It is surprising that this volume is the first introductory companion, or scholarly guide, to the writings of Flavius Josephus. From antiquity to the present day, his works have served as an incomparable source for the world of Judea in the Roman period. What would we know of the Herodian dynasty or of the Jewish War and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. without Josephus's writings? How limited would our knowledge be of the Judean social and political landscape in the Roman period without the details he provides on the priesthood, the "sects," and other movements and individuals? What would historians and archaeologists make of Masada or Gamla? Would we have such a clear view of the topography of the region and of the architectural achievements of Herod the Great?

Josephus's works provide these important details and more. He is a witness to biblical textual and interpretative traditions, as well as to the development of halacha. Examining the reception of Josephus reveals much about the way in which Christian societies engaged with Jews and Judaism. Later Jewish interest in his writings indicates something of how different generations interacted with their past.

Josephus, writing in Greek and drawing on Greco-Roman intellectual traditions, in the context of Flavian Rome, and as a proud Jewish priest offers an interpretation of his people's past and a defense of their culture, while providing a unique glimpse into the complexities of identity politics in the worlds he inhabited.

Yet serious critical engagement with Josephus's works has only emerged since the 1970s. Previously, scholars—of the Bible, Second Temple Judaism, the New Testament and early Christianity, and archaeologists and historians of ancient Judea—used his writings as a source for external realities but gave little consideration to the narratives themselves in terms of audience, aims, and literary form. Critical engagement with Josephus's narratives or his literary techniques was limited; he was regarded as a simple (and usually careless) compiler of sources whose bias or agenda could be stripped away to reveal an authentic source or facts about the past. Discrete pieces of information could be extracted from the text without any attempt to understand the way in which the author selected or presented his material. In his review of scholarship in 1988, Per Bilde calls this approach the "classical conception of Josephus" (Bilde 1988, 126–141).

Pioneering thematic studies of Josephus started to appear in the 1970s with

books by Helgo Lindner (1972), Harold Attridge (1976), and Shaye Cohen (1979). Louis H. Feldman's groundbreaking thematic and literary studies of Josephus's biblical interpretation contributed to the new approaches and the development of "Josephan studies." In the 1980s, the field was advanced by Tessa Rajak's fine monograph (1983) and two specialized and thematically oriented collections by Louis Feldman and Gohei Hata (1987 and 1989), which have also served as guides for scholars.

From the 1990s, critical studies have increased exponentially. A number of doctoral dissertations have appeared on thematic and literary studies of Josephus's writings, and international scholars have gathered to share ideas about the Jewish historian, including: the International Josephus Colloquia (published in several volumes), the York University conference (published in Edmondson, Mason, and Rives 2005), and the Josephus Seminar/Group, which has hosted at least two panels annually at the Society of Biblical Literature's annual meeting since 1999. New translations that give attention to the original language and form of Josephus's writings have appeared in English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, and Japanese. Since 2000, seven volumes of the Brill Josephus Project, edited by Steve Mason, have presented the first comprehensive English translations of, and commentary on, Josephus's works (see Further Reading).

Steve Mason has also developed a website called PACE (Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement), which has links to each of Josephus's texts in Greek (connected to Perseus's word parsing) and English translations, as well as abstracts of dissertations on Josephus. The digital nature of the commentaries means they can easily be updated. Advances in the field have been facilitated by the development of such research tools, starting with the Rengstorff (1973–1983) and Schalit (1968) *Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, Heinz Schrekenberg's text-critical and bibliographical studies (1972 and 1977), and Louis H. Feldman's annotated bibliographies (1984; Feldman and Schrekenberg 1986).

This paradigmatic shift demands that Josephus's writings be subject to the type of critical analysis that takes consideration of the structure of each narrative, its literary form and rhetorical devices, as well as the context in which it was written. Recognition of the importance of both Josephus's historical method and his immediate context in Flavian Rome is central to modern scholarship. As Steve Mason, who has been a leading figure in this methodological revolution, observes, "[T]he movement towards reading Josephus *through*, and not merely reading *through* Josephus to external realities, now provides the dominant agenda" (Mason 2003).

In recent years, an appreciation of how Josephus's works have also shaped the interaction with the ancient Jewish past has emerged with studies of the history of their transmission and reception in a wide variety of contexts. The recent research project in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford University

led by Martin Goodman and Tessa Rajak has brought together scholars from a number of disciplines to trace the Jewish reception of Josephus since Late Antiquity.

Given this intense scholarly attention to the Jewish author and his works, it seems to be the appropriate time to gather together major strands of Josephan scholarship into a *Companion* that can serve as an introduction for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars to an author whose works inform and cross several disciplinary boundaries, including Biblical Studies; Second Temple Studies; New Testament/Early Christianity; Near Eastern and Roman Archaeology; first-century Roman literature, culture, and history; Jewish Studies; Patristics; and Medieval Studies. To maximize accessibility for readers, all Greek and Hebrew words have been transliterated, and translations are provided, including ones from the Loeb Classical Library (LCL) and the Brill Josephus Project (BJP). Authors have chosen either “Jewish” or “Judean” to translate the Greek term “Ioudaios.”

1.1 Structure of the Book

The organization of this volume falls into four major sections: Part One, Writings, Part Two, Literary Contexts, Part Three, Major Themes, and Part Four, Transmission and Reception History. Each scholar has of necessity focused attention on key elements of a given topic, while reconsidering older interpretations and providing new readings. Since Josephus’s texts cover his reckoning of Jewish history from Creation to the Flavian era, and have been read for two millennia, it would be impossible to touch upon all the riches to be discovered in his thirty volumes. But at the same time, this volume provides the most up-to-date investigation of the Latin manuscripts of Josephus, which is helpful for anyone interested in text criticism or reception. Notably, we are not providing the traditional biographical information about Josephus; almost all of what we seem to know about him comes from his self-presentation in his own works, which as literary constructions replete with rhetorical and historical concerns cannot provide us simply with facts.

Perhaps it is best to leave it here with what Suetonius a generation later says of Josephus in *Vespasian* 5.6, after reporting that the future emperor received good news from the oracle at Carmel in Judea: “one of the noble captives, Josephus, when he was being thrown into chains, very firmly insisted that he would be released by the same man [Vespasian] soon, but by that time as emperor.” This same confidence and sense of his place in the world as an elite Jew mark all of his writings.

Opening the first section on each of Josephus’s four texts, Steve Mason argues in [Chapter 1](#) that we need to explore questions regarding *Judean War*’s date,

context, purposes, content, structures, themes, and devices. By examining the length of each of the seven books, the text's symmetry, four major themes, and seven major speeches, Mason challenges us to see the author in control of his text—and his own self-image in that text. [Chapter 2](#) treats Josephus's longest work, *Jewish Antiquities*, a twenty-book survey of 5,000 years of Jewish history from Creation to 66 C.E., the outbreak of the Judean revolt. Daniel Schwartz proposes that the chronological order in this *magnum opus* was controlled by the author Josephus, not by the sources he used. Schwartz examines which main sources Josephus employed for which sections of his history, as well as his technique for ordering the material: a filing system that arranged material into chronological sections devoted to major historical periods with dividers labeled according to each of the early Jewish leaders/rulers, then high priests, and finally Roman governors of Judea. The latter half of *Jewish Antiquities* is an essential source for anyone wishing to work on the Second Temple period, while the entire work provides a window into what interested and mattered to Josephus composing his works at Rome for an audience towards the end of the first century. For Josephus's *Life*, Steve Mason provides in [Chapter 3](#) an analysis that dates the work within its historical context and examines its possible purposes, content, structures, and themes. Mason favors dating the text to 93/94 C.E., and he examines the text within the larger context of Romans writing about the lives of great men in several (overlapping) genres. Mason warns that searching for "history" in *Life* requires first an appreciation of its rhetoric. In [Chapter 4](#), John Barclay analyzes Josephus's *Against Apion* as a text written to combat prejudices against the author and his people. Barclay lays out the organization of the entire work, explaining how Josephus responds to the snobbery and slurs directed at Jews with a positive, welcoming picture of them, while utilizing an apologetic (legally defensive) stance that will later be imitated by Christians. After describing Josephus's direct or indirect sources, Barclay suggests the "declared," "implied," "intended," and "actual" audiences for this text, and concludes with a postcolonial reading of the text that provides an alternative to the scholarly mining for snippets that so often happens with *Against Apion*.

Josephus's literary context shapes Part Two of this *Companion*. Regarding Josephus as a Roman historian, in [Chapter 5](#), Steve Mason considers how Romans authors presented their texts to their audiences and finds Josephus's texts to have been produced under the normal circumstances at Rome, with a patron and an audience. With respect to the emperors, Mason shows that Josephus struck three poses: (1) flattery and dissimulation; (2) honesty; and (3) ironic flattery; this does not stop him from questioning the explosive issue of hereditary monarchy in Flavian Rome, proposing aristocracy as a better form of government than "tyranny." In [Chapter 6](#) on Josephus and Greek literature, Eran Almagor presents a case for viewing Josephus as being right in the thick of late first-century cultural activity surrounding the production of literature, especially oratory. He demonstrates that scholars have generally

overlooked Josephus's texts in their surveys of the "Greek Renaissance" of this period. Setting aside the problem of Josephus's "assistants," Almagor explains that Josephus refers to two types of Greco-Roman oratory, and proceeds to examine examples of these in light of what Philostratus tells us about the birth of the Second Sophistic. Almagor concludes that Josephus, like others wishing to make their mark on the cultural scene of his day, plays the role of the exiled "outsider" well—so well, in fact, that this may be why his texts are not studied adequately in classics programs.

The second section of this volume also treats Josephus in his Jewish literary context. In [Chapter 7](#), Paul Spilsbury establishes the education in the Hebrew Bible that Josephus might have received, which with his priestly status and belief in the prophetic role of historians in the Bible as well as dream interpretation, informed his identity and self-presentation. Spilsbury illustrates that Josephus's texts serve a larger purpose of creating a safe space for Jews to live peacefully within the Roman Empire while enjoying self-determination regarding their laws; this constitution, however, seems predicated on a functioning temple, thus Josephus's concern for genealogies of priests. Spilsbury urges us to read Josephus's re-casting of Hebrew Scriptures in the light of his pride in his own culture and perhaps his subtle defiance of Roman culture as well. Considering Josephus within the wider context of Jewish intellectuals at Rome, in [Chapter 8](#), Maren Niehoff focuses upon Philo as another figure from the Greek East who paved the way for Josephus as he worked in different genres to discuss Jewish laws, Roman emperors, and philosophical concepts. Philo's polemics against Greeks (or Greek culture?) will later be found in Josephus as well, allowing both to construct a "Roman" identity. Niehoff concludes that both Philo and Josephus are trying to convince audiences of the superiority of Jewish thought over Greco-Egyptian religious and philosophical options. In [Chapter 9](#) on Josephus and the New Testament, Helen Bond provides an analysis of three main issues regarding the relationship of Josephus's works to the New Testament writings: how scholars have used Josephus's historical record of events in the late Second Temple period in order to understand better the world in which Jesus lived and the movement that followed him; how Josephus illustrates what we find in the Gospels, but also two cautionary examples (Pharisees/Sadducees and messianism); and how Josephus presents key figures rhetorically, and thus differently, in *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities*. Josephus's works, therefore, provide a counterpoint to the New Testament texts, which have their own rhetorical and theological concerns.

The third section focuses on important themes that are of interest to scholars. In [Chapter 10](#), Zeev Weiss's in-depth examination of Josephus and the archaeology of Galilee examines the interplay between Josephus's texts and the material culture of Galilee in the first century C.E., observing that Josephus presents the Galilee and the Golan as Jewish regions.

Archaeological evidence can provide insight into questions about the local populations, the level of Hellenization, and the background for the lives of Jesus and his early followers. Examining evidence from both rural and urban centers, Weiss shows that Galileans held on to ancestral customs and chose their own wares over gentile ones, while their coinage also asserted their identity. Considering Josephus as a military historian, in [Chapter 11](#), Jonathan Roth invites readers to view Josephus's texts as providing critical information about ancient military affairs pertaining to the Romans, Jews, and other ancient nations. While scholars may focus on rhetoric in Josephus's writings, his accounts, including *Judean Antiquities*, deserve scrutiny for their depictions of different types of combat in his day, the equipment used, and most famously, the Roman army in *Judean War* 3, in which he emphasizes training and discipline. Roth encourages readers to investigate the Josephan texts for descriptions of insurgency and counterinsurgency, issues that are certainly of interest to modern military and political leaders.

As this third thematic section turns to Josephus's treatment of Jewish rulers, Tal Ilan notes in [Chapter 12](#) that women generally played subordinate roles in the Jewish society of that time and were not of primary interest to Josephus, but she finds his works a useful source for discussing Jewish women who were politically prominent in Palestine and elsewhere. Ilan provides her own fresh readings of these key female figures in Jewish history from the biblical period to the Hasmonean and Herodian rulers as well as important women of his own day. On the Hasmoneans specifically, Erich Gruen argues in [Chapter 13](#) that regardless of whether or not Josephus was telling the truth about a family tie to the Hasmoneans, the historian did not deliver a "partisan" interpretation of their actions in his accounts. By examining each ruler, especially in light of 1 Maccabees, Gruen shows that Josephus presents a conflicting—and conflicted—account of the history of this ruling family. In [Chapter 14](#), Jan Willem van Henten reminds us that though Herod the Great is easily the most recognizable Jewish king because of the role he plays in the Gospel of Matthew at the time of the birth of Jesus, Herod also looms large in Book 1 of Josephus's *Jewish War* as well as in Books 15–17 of *Jewish Antiquities*. Van Henten compares and contrasts the accounts found in both texts, teasing out the details that show the differences between the two, with generally the more negative portrait appearing in the latter. What becomes apparent especially in *Jewish Antiquities* is Josephus's negative assessment of Herod's lack of control over his family and the effect it has on his governing, with him ending up a tyrant. Through a careful comparison of the two accounts of Herod's greatest building project, the Jerusalem temple, in *Judean War* 5 and *Judean Antiquities* 15, David Kaden has shown in [Chapter 15](#) that the details in the latter text are written to complement those in the former. In *Judean Antiquities*, Josephus stresses Herod's concern for security in connection with his building projects, which, Kaden argues, derives from the social pressure of Domitian's Rome and perhaps serves as a critique of the

emperor.

Part Three of this volume also addresses Josephus's treatment of other essential aspects of Jewish society in the first century C.E. Albert Baumgarten examines in [Chapter 16](#) how Josephus portrays groups—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Fourth Philosophy, and the Zealots, as well as certain individuals—Bannus, John the Baptist, and Jesus—associated with Jewish movements of a 'sectarian' nature. He opens his examination with a discussion of the terminology Josephus uses: *hairesis*, *philosophia*, *phylon*, and *tagma*. The translation of *hairesis* as "sect" has been the subject of scholarly debate and Baumgarten proposes a re-definition of the term to render it useful for studying these ancient Jewish groups that display very different characteristics. While the nature of Josephus's association with the Pharisees might be debated, it is clear that the priesthood is central to Josephus's identity and to his presentation of Jewish culture and history. In [Chapter 17](#), James McLaren investigates Josephus's self-identification with, and presentation of, the priesthood. It is clear that, for Josephus, the priesthood is essential to the well-being and functioning of Jewish society (providing leadership in the Mosaic aristocratic/theocratic constitution) and in the post-temple period, they are considered to represent both antiquity and continuity. The excursuses on the high priesthood in *Jewish Antiquities* 10 and 20 demonstrate this significance. As for their much-debated role in the Jewish War: McLaren compares the accounts in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* 20 and concludes that the later version, which would seem to contradict the presentation of the priests as opposed to war in *Jewish War*, should be assessed within its larger narrative context and is not critical of the priesthood *per se*. Examining Josephus's halachic material also yields interesting information about his attitudes to different strands within first-century Jewish society, and, in [Chapter 18](#), David Nakman demonstrates that Josephus does not represent one particular tradition of halachic interpretation. Noting Josephus's importance as a non-rabbinic source for the development of halacha in this period, Nakman considers the halachic material in the biblical summary in Books 3 and 4 of *Jewish Antiquities*, the presentation of laws in the second part of Book 2 of *Against Apion*, and some of the many other references spread throughout his work, while keeping in mind the various apologetic contexts of the narratives. Nakman concludes that, on the whole, Josephus supports Pharisaic-rabbinic traditions but notes that in many cases, these seem to actually reflect the accepted practice of the day. Controversial 'sectarian' issues, such as those concerned with purity/impurity, are of no interest to Josephus, whom he sees as belonging to a mainstream "common Judaism." The final chapter in Part Three is also concerned with links between Josephus and the rabbinic movement. In [Chapter 19](#), Richard Kalmin compares traditions about the Sadducees that are shared by Josephus and the writers of the Babylonian Talmud. It is clear that such traditions are not transmitted to the rabbis of Babylon directly from Josephus but originate with

an independent source. As with Josephus, the rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud, in their vilification of this group, focus on the Sadducees' rejection of the authority of non-biblical traditions. While individual Sadducees are condemned in the Palestinian Talmud, this overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the group, based on their rejection of the traditions of the sages, is added by the compilers of the Babylonian Talmud with the arrival of traditions from the West some time in the mid-fourth century C.E.

One of the most exciting aspects of Josephan studies, the transmission and reception history of his texts, is the focus of the fourth section of this volume. In [Chapter 20](#), Tommaso Leoni provides a very detailed and helpful examination of the manuscript tradition and of the editions one can—and should—use to read each of Josephus's four works in the original Greek and Latin translations. For anyone in search of a major undertaking in text criticism, Leoni highlights that we need a new critical edition of Josephus's *Judean War*. The importance of the Latin translations of “the single most copied historical work of the Middle Ages” (O'Donnell 1979, 246) to the reception of Josephus in the West is clear from Levenson and Martin's pioneering examination of the Latin manuscripts in [Chapter 21](#). They have focused their research on the manuscripts of *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* 6–20 because of the lack of critical editions and inaccessibility. In this chapter, they present their analysis of 103 (of at least 230) Latin manuscripts of these texts with background information on the translations and an overview of important work in modern scholarship. They provide charts for the following: the classification of manuscript groups; an example of one passage with readings from seventy-four manuscripts with a guide to how the textual tradition can be analyzed; and a chart of manuscripts they have studied (forty-five of which are currently available online).

This proliferation of manuscripts of Josephus's works attests to the intense interest in his writings from antiquity onwards among Christians. One of the reasons for this long, and complex, reception history, is the existence of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, a passage about Jesus of Nazareth that exists in all the extant manuscripts of Book 18 of the *Jewish Antiquities* (18.63–64). In [Chapter 22](#), Alice Whealey charts how this passage has been transmitted, interpreted, or ignored by Christians (and the Jewish author of the *Sefer Yosippon*) and examines the debate surrounding its authenticity that began already in the sixteenth century. This debate continues to the present time, and Whealey outlines scholarly views, based on manuscript traditions and on stylistic and linguistic analyses, about the authenticity, partial at least, of the *Testimonium Flavianum*. The survival of Josephus's writings is due to Christian transmission, but as Sabrina Inwolocki shows in [Chapter 23](#)—for the period of the second to the fifth century C.E.—they were preserved in the service of Christian anti-Judaism. Her survey of patristic literature illustrates that Josephus's works were so frequently cited and consulted that they were

on one occasion even referred to as a “fifth gospel” (Schreckenberg 1987, 317). The Church Fathers turned to Josephus’s writings in the service of biblical exegesis as they provided extra-biblical material for their study of the Hebrew Bible and for the New Testament (on Jesus, John the Baptist, and James, brother of Jesus). Furthermore, Josephus’s presentation of the antiquity of his people could be reworked into Christian apologetic (against the pagan charge of novelty), while at the same time providing proof texts for the punishment of the Jews—with the destruction of the temple—for not accepting Jesus as the Messiah. She laments the increasing ‘misuse’ of Josephus for anti-Jewish polemics from the fourth century onwards. This subject is taken up by Karen Kletter in [Chapter 24](#), her study of the use of Josephus from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. She notes the constant interest in Josephus’s works as attested not just in the large number of extant manuscripts and references but also from material in Latin vernacular literature. The almost canonical status of his writings by the medieval period—often in support of supercessionist ideas—was assured, due to their polemical use by Eusebius, Jerome, and the author of *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem (De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae)*. Josephus’s writings remained useful for Christian study of the Bible, and Kletter shows how, from the eighth century, Josephus became central to Christian exegetical practices. This interest in Josephus’s works for the study of the Bible secured him a place in Christian intellectual and educational activity through the work of the Victorines and Peter Comester, and back into the polemical forum of Jewish-Christian disputation. In popular non-clerical circles, his works were heavily drawn upon for the *Vindicta Salvatoris* traditions, which in turn were combined with his use as an exegetical and topographical source for the crusader accounts.

While Josephus’s works were being used extensively in Christian circles, there is almost complete silence in Jewish circles until the tenth century when a Hebrew paraphrase, the *Sefer Yosippon*, appeared in Southern Italy, relating the history of the Jews from the time of Daniel and Esther to the destruction of the Second Temple. In [Chapter 25](#), Saskia Dönitz observes that this text was to become the most influential Hebrew historical work of the medieval period. She provides an introduction to the *Sefer Yosippon*, outlining issues relating to which sources the author used and the location and time of its writing, and then surveys the history of its reception and translation, while providing a review of scholarship. Another medieval translation, the Slavonic version of Josephus’s *Jewish War*, is taken up in [Chapter 26](#), with Kate Leeming’s examination of how scholars have tried to explain the origin of this work, which is not based on any extant Greek text. Since Josephus himself notes in the prologue to the *Jewish War* that he wrote an earlier version in his native language for Jews in the East, scholars have postulated that this Slavonic text preserves that original version. Leeming undertakes a survey of the main issues: the history of the text, divergences between the Greek and

Slavonic texts, omissions and additions (many of these are deemed “christological”), other omissions and additions ascribed to translators or copyists, as well as other additions that might be attributable to Josephus. She concludes that because of the complex history of transmission and the Slavonic version’s many discrete textual problems, the origins of this text remain uncertain.

The final chapters in this section provide a glimpse into the reception of Josephus in modern times. In [Chapter 27](#), Silvia Castelli examines the translation and reception of Josephus in the Italian Renaissance. The first translation of *Jewish Antiquities* into Italian at the end of the fifteenth century surprisingly takes place not within an ecclesiastical context but for a Renaissance duke. Castelli observes that from the second half of the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, we need to see the interest in Josephus’s writings in terms of his value as an ancient historian. She traces a shift during the sixteenth century when the *Jewish Antiquities* are again used for the study of the Bible, and with the various prohibitions of vernacular versions of the Bible at the end of the sixteenth century, Josephus’s writings start to gain in popularity and often serve as an alternative to the proscribed vernacular biblical translations. In [Chapter 28](#), Gohel Hata presents a brief history of English translations of Josephus.

The final two chapters focus on the twentieth century. In [Chapter 29](#), Daniel R. Schwartz traces the changing attitudes towards Josephus in Hebrew scholarship from the 1920s to the end of the century. Schwartz shows that the process of transformation of Josephus from low-life traitor in the 1930s to the skilled historian and writer of the 1990s was influenced by trends in scholarship: translations, archaeological discoveries at Qumran and Masada, and the appreciation of the literary nature of historiography. But he also links this reassessment to the changing world in which these scholars found themselves, from pre-State Mandatory Palestine, the experience of the Holocaust, to the wars of the 1970s and 1980s. Schwartz reminds us, “Historians are scholars and professionals, but they also live in the real world.” Honora Chapman concludes this volume with [Chapter 30](#), examining how two films, *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* and *History of the World, Part 1*, reflect the realities faced by Josephus’s Jews under the Romans, while providing a comic spin that also tweaks modern culture of the late 1970s and early 1980s in the United Kingdom and the United States. Josephus’s ‘afterlife’ on the Internet continues the long tradition of transmission, albeit sometimes deliberately mutilated to make classicists laugh.

It is indisputable that Josephus has shaped so much of how historians have reconstructed the world of ancient Judea, whether for the purpose of investigating ancient Jewish and Near Eastern history and culture, or the origins and development of Christianity. The aim of this *Companion* is to present the latest approaches to the study of Josephus in his original context as

well as the uses of his texts in later ages.

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PART I

Writings

CHAPTER 1

Josephus's *Judean War*

Steve Mason

1.1 Introduction

When the fourth-century Church Father Eusebius needed proof that Judeans had forfeited their ancient heritage, he turned to Josephus's *Judean War*. He quoted whole passages on the miseries of the Judeans, especially the cannibalism-inducing famine that preceded Jerusalem's destruction, because, he said, they had killed Christ (*Hist. eccl.* 2.6, 26; 3.5–6; see [Chapter 23](#) by S. Inolowcki in this volume). Eusebius's predecessors had used the *Judean War* with diffidence, preferring to borrow *Apion*'s polemics or to nibble off the bits of the *Antiquities* that mentioned Jesus, James, or the Baptist. Writing with the anxious confidence of the newly rising Church, by contrast, Eusebius took hold of Josephus's famous history and boldly repurposed it. Who knew that the unimpeachably accredited Judean (3.9–10) actually proved Christian claims? Eusebius's daring move launched Josephus's posthumous career as honorary “Jew for Jesus” and single-handedly rewrote the *Companion to the New Testament*. Like Eusebius's *History*, Josephus's *Judean War* would soon be translated into Latin, a treatment not accorded his other works for two centuries (the *Life* never), ensuring its accessibility in the Christian West.

Eusebius did not convince everyone. Later in the same century, the writer we call Pseudo-Hegesippus insisted that Josephus was just too Judean. If he had been so truthful, why did he remain so wedded to Judean values? Anticipating modern scholarship, Pseudo-Hegesippus thought it possible to liberate *Judean War*'s facts from Josephus's interpretation, resetting the jewels in Christian gold (*De excid.* praef.).

Providing a companion essay for perhaps the most influential non-biblical text of Western history is a tall order. Even if we ignore the fascinating reception-history, as we must, the work itself is a dense and subtle narrative in the best Greco-Roman tradition. In the brief compass of this chapter, we must confine ourselves to a few essential questions: date and purposes, content and structures, themes and devices. A glance at *Judean War*'s great speeches will end the tour.

1.2 Date, Context, and Purposes

No one doubts that the *Judean War* was Josephus's first known work, composed soon after he arrived in Rome in 71 C.E. The Greek text we use is reconstructed from a variety of manuscripts dating from the ninth century or later. These exhibit thousands of small variants, not surprisingly, but aside from apparent lacunae of a few words here and there, the text seems complete and readable in seven volumes (Leoni 2009). How and when Josephus composed the Greek history that underlies our manuscripts seem tolerably clear. As always, however, there are complications. But let us first establish the basic picture.

The *Judean War*'s prologue shows Josephus living in Rome, in a lively exchange with others over the recent conflict in Judea (1.1–16). Although it was actually the suppression of a revolt in a long-conquered province, this war had become a *cause célèbre* because of its role, symbolic and practical, in vaulting the victorious generals Vespasian and Titus to imperial power. After the shambles following Nero's suicide in June 68, the Romans needed a trustworthy pair of hands with the promise of peaceful succession, and this Vespasian and Titus—separated by thirty years—could offer. On the practical side, the war had provided the vehicle for a critical mass of the empire's legions, from Egypt through Syria to north-eastern Europe, to declare their support for these proven commanders, against a series of contenders with fewer legions from Spain and Germany. Symbolically, supporters of the Flavians could play the Judean victory for all it was worth, as though it involved a previously unconquered nation. The pliant Senate eagerly offered a historic triumphal procession (last held after Claudius's conquest of Britain in 43/44), the right to extend Rome's sacred boundary, promulgation through landscape-altering monuments and empire-wide coins, and the creation of the new trophy province of Judea in southern Syria.

Newly settled in Rome after the triumph (summer 71), as the city is being rebuilt to expunge Nero's miasma and inscribe Flavian valor, Josephus observes that various hacks are busy writing up accounts of the war. He cuts a large clearing for his own effort with the claim that they are mere stylists, using second-hand information. Or, if they were present in Judea, they are falling over themselves to flatter the imperial conquerors at the expense of the defeated (1.1–3, 7–9). As a proud priest from Jerusalem, who personally fought against Vespasian and watched the sequel as a prisoner in the Roman camp, Josephus is in a unique position to provide that most cherished of historiographical values: balance. His clever argument for according the Judeans more respect is that in making the generals (Vespasian and Titus) conquerors of nobodies, "I suppose they regard them too as unworthy!" (*autois adoxousin*, 1.8). This rhetorical strategy yields the best sense if the two generals are still around to be slighted as he affixes the prologue to his completed work. But Vespasian died on June 23, 79.

This impression that he writes while Vespasian is emperor fits with explicit reflections in his later works. In the *Life* he claims that King Agrippa II exchanged a flurry of letters with him as he was writing the *Judean War*, promising detailed information when they should next meet (366). Agrippa and his sister, the great-grandchildren of Herod, rumored lovers, and crucial allies of the Romans in the war, apparently came to Rome in 75 and remained for years enjoying imperial favor—she as Titus’s powerful mistress (Cassius Dio 65/66.15.3–5). Second, Josephus claims that, in contrast to a rival author who delayed making his work public until the principals were dead, he himself had “gifted the volumes to none other than the *emperators* [Vespasian and Titus], when the deeds were barely out of view” (*Life* 361).

Similarly, in his last known work Josephus explains that moving to Rome gave him the leisure to gather his materials, enlist collaborators for help with the (literary) Greek, and create a record of what he had seen in Judea. He stresses again his fearlessness in inviting the Flavians themselves to prove his account—suggesting that he was suspected of pushing a Judean perspective (cf. Pseudo-Hegesippus): “I was so confident of the truth that I figured I would take those who had become *emperators* in the war, Vespasian and Titus, as my first witnesses of all. I gave the volumes to them first . . .” (*Apion* 1.50–51). The prologue to *Judean War* likewise insists that his fairness is unimpeachable: he will not counter Roman chauvinism by inflating the Judean side (1.9). But a fair picture was already an improvement for the Judeans.

The last datable event mentioned in *Judean War* is Vespasian’s dedication of the stunning Forum and Temple of Peace, which housed many of the spoils from Jerusalem’s temple, near Augustus’s Forum in the city center (*War* 7.158–162; cf. Pliny, *NH* 36.102). The site was opened in 75, so Agrippa and Berenice may have timed their arrival for the big event (Cassius Dio 65/66.15.1). Josephus thus finished his account at some point after the summer of 75 and before Vespasian’s death on June 23, 79. We should allow margins on either side, for Josephus to finish Book 7 after mentioning the Temple of Peace and to circulate drafts before having copies disseminated.

Of the many problems that have been proposed for this dating, we can discuss only two kinds here. The first would affect our views of the literary unity of *Judean War* and of Josephus’s awareness of his environment. For in spite of these clear and coherent indications, scholars have given reasons for shifting the bulk of the work to Titus’s reign (79–81) and much or all of Book 7 to that of Domitian (to 96), with *ad hoc* insertions even later. The reasons have to do with perceived changes of tone or interest, Josephus’s apparent stance toward one or another Flavian ruler, or, more concretely, what he appears to say about a particular individual—a Caecina or a Catullus—in light of what is otherwise known of the man’s career (e.g., Thackeray 1929, 35; Cohen 1979, 84–90; Schwartz 1990, 13–21; Jones 2002, 113–114; Barnes 2005, 136–144). We lack the space even to explain each relevant issue here, so it is fortunate

that two recent studies offer quite full analyses. In a sign of the changed times, they agree that Josephus's dating of the completed *Judean War* to Vespasian's reign remains the best explanation—if the relevant evidence is understood contextually (Brighton 2009, 33–41; Siggelkow-Berner 2011, 25–33). This does not preclude possible tinkering at a later date, of course. It fits, however, with the structural features that I shall point out later.

The other complication would suggest a pre-75 date and potentially affect our view of the *Judean War*'s purpose. In the 264-word opening sentence of *Judean War*, where he is driving home his advantages as an author, Josephus refers twice to an account of the conflict that he had written in his native language (presumably Aramaic). First: "I have set myself the task of providing a narrative in the Greek language, ... having reworked what I had formerly recounted in the ancestral [language] and sent to the upper barbarians" (1.3). It is absurd, he continues, that here in the capital of the world, he should "stand by and watch the truth about such momentous events" being corrupted,

while even the Parthians and Babylonians, the most remote of the Arabs, our own [Judean] compatriot bloc across the Euphrates, and Adiabeniens, should know accurately, through my diligence, why the war began, through what mutations it proceeded, and the way in which it came to an end. (1.6)

In this way, he stresses his unique authority and experience on location, over there. He is an exotic creature who knows the region intimately, and has already written the story in his native language. How could these pampered dilettantes in Rome hope to compete with such a man?

The elusive Aramaic version used to fascinate scholars, who built upon it the classic view of *Judean War*'s purpose, still occasionally aired today. One scholar compounded the mysteries by arguing that the Aramaic survived (via a Greek draft) in the thirteenth-century Slavonic version of the *Judean War* (Eisler 1931, 113–169; see [Chapter 26](#) by Leeming in this volume). Assuming that our Greek *Judean War* is basically a mirror of the lost Aramaic, that the Aramaic was written from Rome to recipients in the Parthian Empire, and that this must have happened soon after Josephus arrived in the capital, Laqueur asked what its purpose could have been. It must have been commissioned propaganda, he concluded, aimed at dissuading elements of the Parthian world from interference with Rome's empire (Laqueur 1920, 125–128). In Thackeray's hugely influential lectures of 1926, he took over this idea with emphasis:

Josephus was commissioned by the conquerors to write the official history of the war for propagandist purposes. It was a manifesto, intended as a warning to the East of the futility of further opposition and to allay the after-war thirst for revenge [from eastern Judeans]. (1929, 27)

The agreement of these giants—Thackeray was more sympathetic toward Josephus's plight (1929, 29)—about the purpose of the Aramaic original, and hence of the Greek "translation," entrenched the "Roman propaganda" interpretation for decades.

The lost Aramaic precursor has since been reconsidered from at least three angles: (1) what Josephus actually says about it; (2) the plausible occasion, scope, and purpose of such an account; and (3) the nature of our Greek text vis-à-vis whatever the Aramaic was. Let us briefly consider these in reverse order. Strangely, although both Laqueur and Thackeray imputed their hypothesized purpose of the Aramaic to the existing Greek, they agreed that the Greek was not simply a translation (Laqueur 1920, 28; Thackeray 1929, 34). This has subsequently been confirmed in every way: from analysis of the verb that Josephus uses to describe his reworking (*metaballô*—not "translate"; Hata 1975) to ever more careful study of the Greek text itself. Weber (1921, 13–18) and Thackeray (1929, 100–124) well realized that our *Judean War* has an ambitiously Atticizing style, and is replete with classical allusions, though they attributed these features to literary "assistants" who must have been effectively ghost writers, largely responsible for the Greek work. That explanation is no longer tenable (Rajak 1983, 233–236). Profound influences from Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, later Hellenistic historians, and possibly Strabo, as well as a heavy investment in politically and philosophically charged Greek vocabulary, make it impossible nowadays to imagine that Josephus wrote this *Judean War* first in Aramaic and then brought it over into Greek (Ladouceur 1980, 1983, 1987; Eckstein 1990; Chapman 1998; Mader 2000, 6–10, 156–157; Shahar 2004; Mason 2008 *passim*). The whole frame and political logic depend on a Greek discourse widely shared among eastern Mediterranean elites (see themes below).

If the Aramaic mentioned by Josephus cannot be re-constituted from our Greek text, we can only speculate about its contents and scope. Even if we took his description at face value—it included the war's beginning, course, and end (1.6)—it could have been a very compact work, with little resemblance to our *Judean War*. What if, for example, as a priest from Jerusalem with extensive contacts in the East (see Neusner 1969, on Jerusalem-Parthian connections), Josephus wrote a series of letters, while he was still in the region, keeping his eastern friends abreast of developments? Laqueur assumed that because the Aramaic included the end of the war, and Josephus moved to Rome soon thereafter, he must have written it in Rome (1920, 125–126). But there was plenty of time between Jerusalem's fall (September 70) and his trip to Rome (spring 71) for Josephus to have knocked together a sketch of the whole conflict, or even a last "letter from the field" in a series. Any such effort could explain his rhetorical appeal to this credential in the Greek prologue. He does not assume that his audience knows this earlier work or invite them to consult it. Anyway, it is difficult to see why the

Flavians would have commissioned a lengthy history from Rome in a barbarian tongue: partly because complex narratives are not best suited to the needs of propaganda (why include volumes 1 and 2?), partly because they would have had no control over what he was saying, and partly because Parthia's elites were perfectly comfortable in Greek (Debevoise 1938, xli; Grajetzki 2011, 14). Besides, it seems doubtful that the Flavians were worried in the early seventies about an attack on their eastern frontier from recently reconciled Parthia (Rajak 1983, 174–184).

Finally, Josephus's other indications about his process in writing the present *Judean War*, mentioned above, leave little room for an Aramaic base text; it receives no clear mention outside of that boast in the prologue to *Judean War* (the verb at 7.455 is not likely to suggest a translation). The more we think about its possible shape and context, the less relevant the Aramaic becomes for understanding our existing *Judean War*. Recent scholarship on the *Judean War* either marginalizes it (e.g., Mader 2000, 153 n. 6; Landau 2006, 211 n. 24) or more often simply ignores it. Scholarly interests do change.

The main alternative to the Flavian propaganda interpretation is the now-standard view, based solely on the *Greek* text of *Judean War*, that Josephus wrote to absolve the Judean people as a whole, or at least the ruling class and his good self, from blame for the war. He off-loaded culpability onto a few troublemakers, whom he labels “tyrants” and “bandits” (e.g., Luther 1910, 15; Rhoads 1976, 12, 56; Rajak 1983, 78–83; Goodman 1987, 20–21; Bilde 1988, 77–78; Mason 1991, 64–67; Price 1992, 33, 186; McLaren 1998, 55–56; Mader 2000, 10–17). This interpretation begins in a famous section of the prologue (1.9–11):

I have permitted my own feelings to mourn over the calamities of my native place. That *domestic civil strife* brought it down, and that *the Judean tyrants* drew both the Romans' unwilling hands and the fire upon the shrine, Titus Caesar—the very one who destroyed it—is witness ... He gave opportunity even during the siege for a change of mind on the part of *those responsible*. Now, in case anyone might recklessly impugn what we say accusingly against *the tyrants and their bandit bloc* or our groaning over the misfortunes of our native place, let him grant indulgence for this feeling, beyond the law of history. For indeed it happened that our city, of all those under the Romans, reached the most complete happiness, then in turn fell in the worst of calamities ... and since no foreigner was the cause of these things, it was not possible to keep control over one's lamentations.

The problem with the more recent view is that scholars (myself included) have usually taken these remarks as a kind of thesis statement, as though the seven-volume history were an argumentative essay. In this respect, it faces the same liabilities as the propaganda hypothesis, for such a complex narrative is not reducible to logical homogenization (Bilde 1979). We need to reconsider

the work's content and structures.

1.3 Content and Structures

In the section of the prologue just quoted, Josephus vents his emotions as an ostentatious exception to his promise of balance and regard for the laws of history. But on what specific issue is he so emotionally overwhelmed? He is speaking here of the final catastrophe that befell his native city and the world-famous shrine he had served as priest. Indulging his emotions at such length costs him nothing (cf. MacMullen 2003, 1–78; Marincola 2003). But it underscores his eyewitness involvement while ramping up the dramatic quotient. He is not laying out the content of the following narrative, however. That he will do later (1.18–30), though even there he touches only on selected points of interest to his audience rather than providing a proportional Table of Contents. The calculated outburst quoted above attaches to the *outcome* of the war, which his audience knows and which the end of Book 6 will describe in detail. The blameworthy “tyrants” are Simon bar Giora and John of Gischala, primarily, Eleazar, son of Simon, secondarily. They become prominent only from the latter half of Book 4 (esp. 5.1–21; 7.259–273 [261]). So Josephus is not here offering a thesis about how the war began, much less blaming anyone for *that*. From the end of Book 2 through most of Book 3, he foregrounds his own energetic labors as a general, whose forces caused the Romans enormous trouble. That is the basis of his reputation and qualification as a historian (“I myself fought the Romans ...”). It cannot be said that he was trying to conceal his involvement in the war’s *origins*.

Any account of the *Judean War* will need to deal with its contents, and these may be surprising in their proportions (Figure 1.1). In a work of about 125,600 words (the printed Niese *maior* text), the weight is clearly at the beginning. Book 1 is by far the longest, and Books 1 and 2 together constitute 42% of the whole. In *Judean Antiquities* (about 306,488 words) each volume comes much closer to the mean of 15,324 words, the *Life* being typical at 15,835 words. Since Josephus created *Judean War*’s book divisions himself (cf. *Ant.* 13.298; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.21.3; 3.6.1, 20; 9.3), we can see that instead of allowing his content simply to spill over from one scroll to the next (contrast *Apion* 1.320), he fashioned each volume as a unity and created a history from seven of these. This meant stuffing some scrolls to overflowing (especially 1 and 2) while leaving others (6–7) much less busy. He evidently wanted to begin the Flavian campaign in Book 3 and conclude the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of Book 6. Although he could have included Book 7 (triumph and the desert fortresses) with 6 in a single volume that would still have been shorter than Book 1, he preferred to keep the last two separate and of almost exactly the same length.

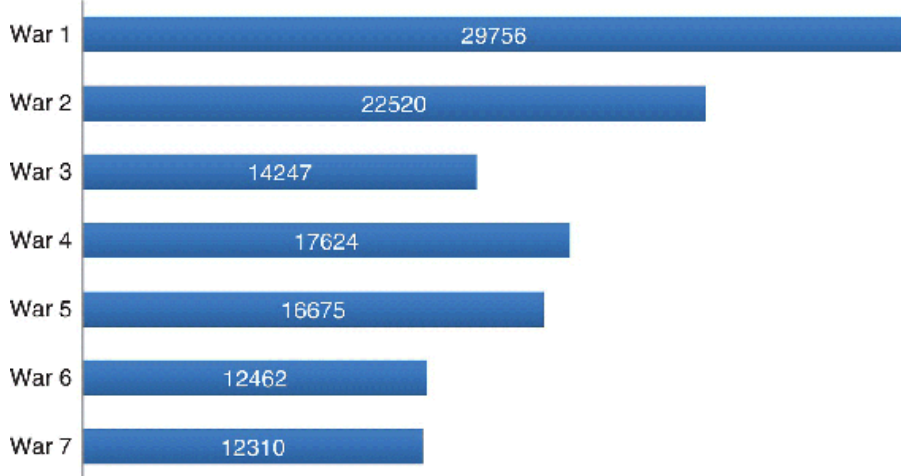


Figure 1.1 *Judean War*: Word counts per book.

Two conclusions force themselves upon us. First, Book 1 is important. Many readers or hearers would presumably never have made it past this double-strength volume. Of the many important histories we now know in fragments (Polybius, Livy, Tacitus's *Histories* and *Annals*), it is the first part—usually not the most important for historians—that remains intact. Any account of Josephus's aims that imagines a reader flipping past it in book-like pages to reach the end, will be implausible. We must think about what it contributes. Second, Josephus's effort to reserve each volume for a certain story arc, no matter how lengthy or brief, suggests that he hoped to create a symmetry based on the volumes, rather than on the mass of material, for example, by matching the prelude (Book 1) with the aftermath (Book 7). This impression is confirmed by the wildly varying periods of time covered in each book, from 167 years in Book 1 to just a few months in others (3, 6). Before considering the symmetry issue, let us take a tour through the contents.

1. From the primal conflict that created Onias's temple in Egypt and the Hasmonean Revolt to the funeral of Herod the Great, with a preview of the succession problem (ca. 170–4 B.C.E.). The Hasmonean story is compact (1.31–122), focusing on the rapid acquisition of territory after the peril of Antiochus IV's accession and the rulers' political agility in making alliances. Those themes continue under the main character Herod, whose rule over southern Syria emerges from the Roman civil war. Herod's story is tragic: the brilliant regional success of his rule from Jerusalem is undone by his inability to escape his passions and related domestic intrigues.
2. From the Herodian succession conflicts to Josephus's control over the northern defenses, with a Jerusalem preview (4 B.C.E.–66/67 C.E.). Archelaus's rule is displaced by succession hearings before Augustus, a story interrupted by revolts in Judea (4 B.C.E.). The main narrative

intertwines regional politics, especially Judean-Samaritan issues, with Roman attempts at governance from Jerusalem or Caesarea. A failed diplomatic effort to judaize Caesarea generates violence throughout southern Syria and a failed intervention by the legate from Antioch, resulting in the loss of his legion to Judean militants. The final section is about the Jerusalem leadership's reluctant preparation for inevitable Roman retaliation: hence Josephus's assignment to Galilee.

3. From Vespasian's appointment to the fall of Josephus's northern command—except Gamala, Tabor, and Gischala (spring to late autumn, 67 C.E.). The narrative slows dramatically, after a survey of the terrifying Roman forces and a digression on the (alleged) invincibility of the legions, to highlight the few weeks of Josephus's brilliant defense before his surrender. Apart from his leadership, the war in Galilee is a non-event following Sepphoris's pre-emptive capitulation and the scattering of potential fighters. So the Galilean war is over with Josephus's drawn-out surrender at Iotapata (Yodfat). As a favor to Agrippa II, however, Vespasian and Titus confront his newly restive city of Tiberias, and militants who flee from there to Tarichea.
4. From the Galilean remnants to the summer of 69 in Judea; civil war in Rome to Vespasian's remote victory; Titus returns to Caesarea in preparation for the next volume (late 67–December 69). In a preliminary section, Vespasian and Titus deal with the fortress Gamala, Agrippa's last troublesome site, as well as remnants at Tabor and Gischala. The Gischala story brings John to Jerusalem, where he dominates the first half of Book 4 as key "tyrant." In the middle of the volume, John reveals his true colors by arranging for Idumaeans to enter the city and displace the popular chief-priestly notables, whom they murder. The latter half belongs to tough-guy Simon bar Giora, whom the surviving notables welcome as the only conceivable antidote to John's poison—inadvertently creating a more intractable problem. The final section shifts to the contemporaneous and comparable civil war and terror—Judeans were not the only ones plagued by *stasis*—in Vitellius's Rome.
5. From the post-Ananus factionalism in Jerusalem via the siege of Titus to the horrors of murder and famine in Jerusalem (ca. December 69–June 70). Titus's campaign is described in five parts: early narrative, digression on Jerusalem as an impregnable stronghold (emphasis on walls and surrounding depths), continuing narrative, Josephus's grand speech to the rebels, final narrative. Each narrative section moves back and forth between Roman and Judean conditions and also changes lenses from wide-angle to telephoto (focusing vividly on individuals from the masses on each side). In the background is the gradual hardening of Titus, after his many efforts to provoke early surrender

with both carrots and sticks are rebuffed.

6. From Titus's renewed siege to the fall of Jerusalem (ca. late June–early September 70). This dramatic climax brings many threads together. It opens with the dispirited Romans redoubling their characteristic efforts (discipline, columns, ramps) against a seemingly unconquerable, death-defying, and endlessly resourceful foe. The internally generated miseries reach their nadir, however, in the horrendous famine and the tragedy of aristocratic Maria's cannibalism (6.193–219). This fires Titus with a determination to bury the city, though he too is trapped in this divinely orchestrated story. When he overcomes his emotion and resolves to spare the temple, it burns anyway and the city falls. This is the consequence of the strife perpetuated by the tyrants (John, Eleazar, Simon): divine retribution for their compatriot bloodshed and pollution of sacred spaces.
7. From the fall of Jerusalem to the end of Onias's temple in Egypt, with a relevant glance at the author's post-war life (September 70–ca. 75 C.E.). The overall shape of Book 7 contrasts the dire consequences for Judeans in Syria and Egypt along with the Roman triumph, on the one hand, with compelling stories of Judean heroism (Machaerus) and final disaster (Masada) in the remnant areas. The book ends with the closing of Onias's dissident temple and reminds us of the author's towering virtue.

This brief sketch, though no more 'objective' than any other, turns up some points to be reckoned with. For example, Josephus knows well the rhetorical mandates of variation (of scene, sub-genre, content, style, tone), vivid portrayal (moving from the general to the very particular), and symmetry. We cannot discuss all his digressions, but after building tensions up to a point, he takes every opportunity to punctuate his narrative, moving from place to place and angle to angle, introducing a rousing speech (below) or a geographical description, even dropping in a philosophical diversion. The most famous of these is the lengthy description of Judea's three schools (2.119–166), in which the Essene 'legion' (*tagma*) pushes the other two aside by virtue of its uniquely virtuous-masculine way of life (cf. Philo, *Prob.* 75–91; Pliny, *NH* 5.73; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). It is linked to the surrounding narrative in all sorts of ways, especially by Josephus's emphasis on this school's courage and endurance in the recent war, shown in their contempt for death and smiling at torture. The volume that is freest from such variation, or distraction, is Book 6. By that point, with all the preliminaries of Book 5 in place, Josephus puts us on a fast train heading toward Jerusalem's destruction, from which there can be no escape. He requires us to look squarely and without relief at the horrors of gruesome violence, oozing corpses, famine, bloodshed, cannibalism, and the destructive purging fire, as insolent men in Jerusalem prefer to see the city destroyed than give up their

personal ambitions.

As for symmetry, the outline highlights a common pattern. In most volumes Josephus finds a way to frame the central section with opening and closing panels. This is clearest in Book 2 (opening in Rome, main story of regional conflict in Judea to the Cestius disaster, closing panel on Josephus's preparation in Galilee [for Bk 3]), in Book 3 (opening frame on Roman army, closing on the return of Agrippa's cities, central narrative concerning Josephus as defender of Iotapata), and in Book 4 (opening frame on remnants of Galilee, main section on John and then Simon in Jerusalem, closing shift to the Roman civil war).

Josephus also makes frequent use of anticipation (prolepsis), most obviously by introducing a case at the beginning of Book 1, Onias's temple in Egypt, that he will resolve only at the end of Book 7. In Book 2 he sprinkles notes about the future importance of characters such as Eleazar, son of Yair, "who would later exercise tyranny at Masada" (2.447; cf. 7.253–401), or Simon bar Giora, who begins a career of tyranny but is chased off by Ananus to Masada, where he stays until the chief priest's death (2.652–654). These characters play no significant role in Book 2 itself, but especially because the audience is likely to know them as the two chief culprits (6.434; 7.36, 154) the anticipatory notices heighten suspense as they wait for Book 4. In Book 5, more subtly, Josephus refers to the reversal of fortune that would soon meet King Antiochus of Commagene, though at the time of the remark he is at the peak of his good fortune (5.461); the comment heralds his downfall at 7.232–243. More subtly yet, the story of Simon from Scythopolis, who runs through his parents, wife, and children before killing himself in a sudden recognition of his crime (of compatriot killing), and the speech Josephus furnishes him with, unmistakably anticipate *Judean War's* near-final scenes at Masada and Eleazar's speech there (2.469–476; 7.332–336). Such anticipations create further problems for any notion that Book 7 was an afterthought.

Josephus's anticipations in Book 2 of the horrifying siege and tyranny (Books 5–6) remind us how much narrative changes as the story develops. This recognition undermines the perception that he programmatically blames a few bad men for *causing the war*. In the two lengthy volumes devoted to the war's origins he paints a much more human and understandable picture. Conflicts burst out here and there, in the unsettled aftermath of Hasmonean and especially Herodian rule. No viable successor to Herod can be found, to rule the region from Jerusalem (2.1–118), and though the elites of all the ethnic groups continue looking to Rome for redress, it is the Judeans who suddenly become most vulnerable, with the shift of government to Caesarea. Roman legates try to manage things remotely, but the system crashes in Nero's final years.

Thus Josephus does not claim that evil men *generated* the war. He writes as the survivor of a massive trauma, searching for what hindsight allows him to

identify as the war's causes. He does not say that people at the time (or any of lasting significance) were steadily pushing for war. Notice, for example, his admission that Nero's decision to keep Caesarea "Greek" became a foundation for the war, though no one could have guessed then that the seemingly trivial, local incidents involved would issue in such calamities (2.284–285).

From his post-war perspective, the auxiliary army based in Caesarea with its garrison in Jerusalem is simply "Roman," because that is now the important point: its conflicts with Judeans called forth stronger medicine from Rome. Josephus knows that these conflicts arose largely because the auxiliary was actually Samaritan (2.52; cf. *Ant.* 19.356–365; 20.176), but his purpose in *Judean War* 2 is to show why things turned out as they did, not to relive decisions made at the time in context—though he goes remarkably far in that direction, too. Jerusalem's militants evidently massacred the auxiliary garrison because it was a hated Samaritan force, which had exceeded even Florus's orders in killing Judeans (2.296–332 [305, 332]). To make the point, the Judeans spared both the supporting force from King Agrippa and the cohort's Roman commander Metilius, who was even willing to judaize (2.430–456). It was the auxiliaries they hated, for their relentless brutality. But the cohort was also part of the Roman military, and its massacre could not go unpunished by Rome (*Life* 407–408). Or again, the exasperated younger priests' decision "to accept no gift or sacrifice from an outsider" (2.410) seems to have been directed first against those most likely to make such contributions (perhaps marking the end of Tyrian shekel as temple currency; 2.412–414); but in retrospect Josephus reflects on the implications for Judea's relations with Rome (2.409).

This is what creates the tragic irony: the characters in the story do not have the narrator's hindsight. They go about their lives—hot-headed youths, other-worldly fanatics, tough militants, helpless women and children, and wise elders—acting according to type. Some elders (and Josephus himself) know intuitively that vigilantism never comes to any good, and they habitually counsel submission, which the new procurator and his force abuse. The reader feels deeply the sense of rampant injustice and the lack of recourse, with Florus and his Samaritan muscle the only interlocutors, the northern legate and King Agrippa seemingly powerless to help. Even today we can understand Josephus's claims that the young and energetic would respond in ways that seemed only right to them—but sealed their doom. We are watching the creation of a perfect storm. There are no Judean tyrants here. Before the Cestius affair and the Judeans' ambush of his retreating legion (2.499–555), Josephus's voice is much more observational than hectoring. His excoriations of the tyrants who would take over Jerusalem, from the end of Book 4, will create a rather different atmosphere.

We have noted Josephus's framing technique. In several volumes he coils the

narrative around itself on a central spindle (Greek *periodos*) and then, after reaching a critical moment, starts to unravel it. In Book 1, depending on whether one includes the prologue, the central section falls near the beginning or near the end of Herod's decisive capture of Jerusalem (1.340–357). In Book 2, the end of the Caesarea conflict (2.292) comes just before the halfway point (10,269 words of 22,520). It is the unfolding of the Caesarea situation—a massacre of Judeans (paired with the massacre of auxiliaries in Jerusalem), Judean retaliation throughout southern Syria, and counter-retaliation in the Greek cities—that forces the legate Cestius fatefully to intervene (2.457–499). The nearly precise halfway point of Book 6's 12,462 words comes at the dramatic conclusion of Maria's cannibalism, itself the climax of increasingly desperate famine and brutality, with Titus's resolve to bury the city (6.219 ending 6,202 words).

It would be hard to see this pattern as mere coincidence, for even within the passage on the philosophical schools, we find such a concentric structure. The fulcrum comprises the twelve oaths that initiates take (2.139–142), signposted by the rare but mirrored verbs 'reckon in' and 'reckon out' on either side (2.138, 143). Moving out from there we meet important parallel stops—reverence for the sun as a deity (2.128, 148), the rare phrase "make it a point of honor" (2.123, 146), the rare agent-noun "despiser" (of wealth and the terrors of death, 2.122, 151)—until we reach the outer points with their discussions of women, children, sex (2.119–121, 160–161), and Pharisees and Sadducees (2.119, 162–166).

If this approach has merit, we should expect to find something important around the middle of Book 4, the centre of the *Judean War*, and that is the case. In the volume's 17,624 words, the precise halfway point comes at 8,812. Just one sentence before that (8,781 words) is the decisive turning point of the volume and the whole work alike. This is the end of the encomium on Ananus and Jesus (4.325), who have been managing the war effort since the defeat of Cestius, and whose murder now at the hands of John's Zealots and Idumaeans ushers in tyranny and final disaster. Josephus's encomium on the chief priests—"the capture of the city began with the death of Ananus, and from that very day came the overthrow of the walls and the ruin of the Judean commonwealth, on which they saw the leader of their own rescue slaughtered in the middle of the *polis*" (4.318)—makes clear the pivotal role of this episode. And in Book 7, when he turns to the final debacle of Masada, he recalls that this murder of the chief priests removed the last traces of piety toward God and any remnants of the nation's political integrity (7.267).

Back in Book 4, he furnishes the episode with a grand frame, suiting its importance. John's Zealot faction deceptively entices a large force of Idumaeans to enter the city and get rid of their enemies (4.224–313). Those skilled, fresh, and heavily armed fighters accomplish the task efficiently, but then abruptly discover they have been misled. They supposedly march back

out of Jerusalem in disgust at John (4.345–365). The artificiality of these literary gates on either side of the event is clear from the fact that Idumaeans actually remain as a significant factor in the rest of the war (4.566; 5.248–250; 6.381), unaware that they are supposed to have gone home.

This much information alerts us to watch for other signposts of symmetry. There are many, for example: Antiochus Epiphanes (at 1.31–40; 7.219–244; cf. 5.460); anachronistic references to Medes (1.50, 62; 7.244–246); Masada introduced and destroyed (1.237–238, 264–266; 7.252–406, 455); the *Pascha* festival, with “many sacrifices” explained (only at 2.10; 6.423); a heaping of corpses worse than in a foreign war (2.30; 6.259, 421); souls of the good at death enter the “most refined ether” (2.152; 6.47); a “pseudo-prophet” misleads the people and costs many lives (2.261; 6.285); the burning of temple porticoes by Romans, with either Judeans or Romans dying five ways (2.229–230, 405; 6.233); Agrippa’s and Titus’s speeches (“Don’t foolishly rely on ...”; 2.362; 6.328–332); Josephus imprisoned, predicts Vespasian’s rise; the prediction is fulfilled and he is released (3.387–408; 4.622–644); all Galilee and the north subdued, all the south except Jerusalem subdued (4.120, 4.490). This kind of patterning is not a matter of either mathematical precision or mysterious codes, of course. Arranging episodes near the beginning to be reprised near the end (not necessarily in exact order) is simply art. It helps to create a general impression of shape, symmetry, and closure. The technique of closing where one opened is common still today, even in newspaper and magazine articles.

In light of these patterns, Josephus’s remarks at the beginning of the *Judean Antiquities* take on a particular meaning. There he relates that he had contemplated including the ancient past as part of the *Judean War*. Because the size would have been excessive, however, “I separated that [work] by itself and *measured off a balanced composition*, with the beginnings and the ending proper to it” (*tais idiais archais autou kai tõi telei tẽn graphẽn synemetrêsa*; 1.6–7). The verb *symmetreô* (cf. *symmetry*) is architectural, often used for the coordination of columns or other features to create proportion (*War* 1.411; 5.192; *Ant.* 8.74). Josephus was conscious of having constructed his *Judean War* in just such a way.

1.4 Sources of the *Judean War*

This analysis requires a decisive break with an ingrained tradition in scholarship, which would attribute the shape of Josephus’s narratives to available source material. The general idea has been that Josephus wanted to make a name by writing a big book, but its evident lack of *historical* proportion, for example, the relative skimpiness of information on the period from 6 to 66, shows that he was stuck with following whatever source

material was at hand. On this view, his detailed story of Herod, which many have found hardly relevant to the war, is there because the material was there—in the detailed history by Herod's aide Nicolaus of Damascus. After the succession hearing in Rome, however, Nicolaus's material ran out and Josephus had to rush through the next six decades with only a few episodes before he could turn to his own experience in Galilee—even there relying on a source *he* had written (see the essay on his *Life* in this volume)—and especially to the Flavian generals' field notes (*commentarii*; e.g., Hölscher 1916, 49–50; Thackeray 1929, 411; Grabbe 1992, 370–371). Weber imagined the “cowardly and incompetent” Josephus, “prophet of the new Caesar,” taking over bodily a Flavian literary work on “The Salvation of the Empire” through Vespasian, for Books 3 to 6 plus the Roman triumph. This ready-made literary work provided most of what he did not know personally (Weber 1921, 89–284). Likewise Josephus must have included the lengthy account of philosophical schools where he does, after finding it ready-made in some source or sources (Bauer 1924, 404; Gray 1993, 82), *because* he had a dearth of historical source material for that period. When he gives a much fuller account of the same events in *Antiquities* 13–20 (see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz on *Antiquities* in this volume), he can do so because he has discovered new sources. In short, the assumption has been that the shape of his narrative is determined by his sources.

We should all agree that Josephus used sources in some way or other for most of what lay beyond his personal knowledge. And most of the *Judean War* falls in that category: not only events before he reached maturity (Books 1 to ca. 2.249), but much of what occurred inside Jerusalem after his surrender in Galilee, along with Book 7 outside Rome. Once we agree on this, however, we must then clarify and qualify. First, because he was a demonstrably creative writer, Josephus did not need much to spin out a story in rhetorically or morally compelling terms, creating speeches for characters and adding his flourishes. With many episodes that he does include, such as the two concerning Pilate (2.169–177), a little knowledge—that incidents involving a cohort's standards and an aqueduct produced protests and deaths—goes a long way. His stories are highly stylized with matching structures and vocabulary. Second, even where he did have a general knowledge of events, as we all have general knowledge of our nations' histories, he might well have used sources. Academics use all kinds of sources to write about subjects in which they are supposedly “expert.” We should not erect a fence between what Josephus personally knew and what he took from sources. Third, although our bookish proclivities often lead us to assume that sources were written, Josephus must have known a great deal from oral tradition. He was after all a prominent priest in Jerusalem. When I was a boy, I heard a great deal from my father about John F. Kennedy, LBJ, and Vietnam, and I would confidently call on that “knowledge.” Although no modern historian would trust such oral tradition in writing about the 1960s, Josephus was not a modern historian.

Many of his episodes would have required no more knowledge than I have of Kennedy. Then again, what do “oral traditions” look like? Do they come in sealed packages? How are they different from simply “knowing” what one has heard from trustworthy people?

In any case, the shape of Josephus’s works cannot have been determined by his available source material. He knew vastly more than he wrote. For example, though we may be sure that he took the extensive material on Herod from sources that *included* Nicolaus of Damascus, he did not use everything he found, or present it as Nicolaus had done. The much fuller material on Herod in *Judean Antiquities* 14 to 17 also comes largely from Nicolaus (*Ant.* 7.101; 13.347; 14.9, 104; 16.183; cf. *War* 1.629; 2.34, etc.), and yet it shows a completely different structure, significantly varied content and causal links, and a new rhetorical coloring within parallel episodes (Laqueur 1920, 128–220). As his biblical paraphrase proves (Feldman 1998a, 1998b), Josephus was not a slave to his sources, but rewrote and shaped the narrative as he saw fit. But this means only that he was well aware of common literary-rhetorical values taught throughout the Mediterranean basin (Criboire 2001, 220–244). It does not mean that he never became lazy and copied a few sentences, or took over others’ phrases when he could not find his own *mot juste*.

In the *Judean War* we can often see that he has condensed written or oral source material. I refer the reader to two examples. The first, concerning Herod’s descendants (2.218–222), mentions Agrippa’s death in one phrase, that of his brother in another, and dispenses with the governorships of Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander in a single sentence. A brief sentence covers the posterity of Alexander. Josephus knew much more about these topics, however. In a later volume (5.147–155), he will say a lot more about Agrippa’s wall. In general, what he chooses to pass over here is found in the *Judean Antiquities* parallel, which presents the same points more fully (*Ant.* 19.326–352; 20.1–16, 97–104; 18.130–142). We must conclude that much of that *Judean Antiquities* material was already known to him when he wrote *Judean War*, but he carefully selected and pruned it for the earlier narrative. At *Judean War* 2.248–251, similarly, Josephus gives a rapid-fire overview of Roman affairs in 54 C.E. and following. He drops many names associated with Claudius, with knowing allusions to “Agrippina’s tricks” and the emperor’s other family members, then Nero’s whole career of stage performance and brutality against distinguished men. Yet he refrains from expanding on what would be, in these happier Flavian days, “burdensome for everyone” (2.251). It is not plausible that he knows no more than what he says, or that the amplifications of these points in *Judean Antiquities* arise entirely from new material.

Josephus was not at the mercy of his sources, then. To put it the other way around, we are in no position to ascertain what he *knew* from what he chose to write. As for the sources he did use for the *Judean War*, we know less than

scholars used to know. Understanding Josephus to be an Aramaic-educated Pharisee from Jerusalem, more or less isolated from Hellenistic culture, they reasoned that for him to have produced the *Judean War* in excellent Greek, so soon after leaving Judea, he must have had enormous help both in finding material and in writing it up (Weber 1921, 10–13). His later acknowledgment of “collaborators” (*Apion* 1.50) was therefore thought to be a late admission of dependence on ghostwriters (above). For source material, he must have simply borrowed Nicolaus of Damascus for Book 1 and the first part of Book 2, then Roman field notes or Weber’s “Flavian work” from Book 3 (some use mentioned at *Life* 341, 358; *Apion* 1.56), supplemented by an array of small sources, traditions, and personal memories (summary in Thackeray 1929, 36–41). Scholars felt they needed to attribute as much of the heavy lifting as possible to other hands.

The main difference in our approach today is that, beginning from a very different view of Judea’s position vis-à-vis Greek culture (e.g., Hengel 1981), and taking seriously both Josephus’s diplomatic mission to Rome as a young man (*Life* 13–16) and the many affinities of his *Judean War* with contemporary Greek literature, we cannot assume that he was so ignorant of that larger culture (see [Chapter 6](#) by Almagor in this volume). For him to think in such a deeply “Greek” way seems to require a much longer period of interaction with the surrounding world. The unity of language and conception in his work, revealed by the concordance and electronic databases, speaks further against the notion that other writers are chiefly responsible for one part or another (e.g., Rajak 1998). Since he was demonstrably a creative Greek-language author, then, we cannot say that because we know some of his sources, we have any clarity about how many he used, where he used them, or the extent to which they shaped his narrative, never mind the problem of defining and tracking “oral traditions.”

1.5 Thematic Threads

If the *Judean War* does not have an argument-like thesis or single bias (*Tendenz*), to which Josephus accommodates his material, it does nevertheless construct a coherent narrative atmosphere. This results not only from the use of similar devices (speeches, digressions, patterning) and structures, but also from the weaving of recurring themes through the whole fabric. Readers will discover such things for themselves. As a would-be reading companion, however, I might suggest some approaches.

The single most important message that any ancient historian needed to convey was one that stood mostly behind the text, namely: he was a man of

character, seriousness, and authority (Marincola 1997, 128–174). Although modern historians wish to be well regarded too, we go about it differently. Not knowing our readers, we must try to win their support with evidence and reasoning, inviting them to retrace the steps of our analysis and to agree. For first-century Roman historians, a long tradition with Thucydides as model went in another direction. They did not try to win trust as specialists, painstakingly reconstructing what had happened and showing how they reached their conclusions. History was above all a moral and literary undertaking, typically done by statesmen in retirement, another expression of the character they had already exhibited in public, not least in military affairs. Instead of trying to show how they knew that x, y, and z had happened, they offered events as *exempla* for the lessons they wished to draw. We see this in Josephus's *Judean War*. He begins by stating his credentials, in lofty dismissal of competitors (1.1–3), and proceeds with a narrative that everywhere implies, “As you can see *from my perceptive analysis*, my judgements are trustworthy.”

It was not a one-way street from authority to trustworthiness, to be sure. Instead of presenting evidence and arguments, authors displayed culture and urbanity with the well-timed deployment of resonant political vocabulary, vivid battle scenes, moral-philosophical reflections, and meaningful classical allusions. They aimed at a quality of political analysis that would put them in the same league as Thucydides. Josephus tries to win over his audience by such techniques: “I am someone you can trust to tell you the (moral) truth about what happened in this war.” Every use of such devices, and every comparison between Rome and Judea, helps to cement the vital bond between the Judean author and those around him in the capital: “We’re not so different, you and I.”

Rather than trying to trace the countless themes that run through the *Judean War*, I propose to corral them under four heads: (1) the national character; (2) managing the *polis*; (3) Jerusalem’s tragedy; and (4) cultic pollution and purification. Others would arrange them differently, but since I offer these for initial orientation, it does not matter.

In advocating for his nation, Josephus distinguishes cleanly between the bad political choices made by some of his people and the national-ethnic character. Near the end he portrays Romans admiring, or at least being amazed at, the unexpected daring of the people at Masada, the “nobility of their resolve” to take their own lives, and their “contempt of death” (7.405–406). Although Josephus does not speak in his own voice there, the references to Judean daring and contempt of death are characteristic, and he does not shrink from crediting with these traits even rebels whose political decisions he repudiates. In one passage, after acknowledging the courage of a Roman centurion he had come to know, Josephus lists those who “fought with distinction” from John’s and Simon’s factions as well as among the Zealots

(6.81–92). He stresses the point that the Judean character, contrary to the portraits of those other writers, is rooted in unshakable masculine courage and endurance. We have seen that he uses this point in the prologue to enhance the Flavian victory, but it is clear throughout the narrative that he wishes to stress the nature of his people as a nation. Because of these qualities they often wrong-foot and embarrass even the famed legions.

In Josephus's time the "illusion" of old Sparta provided the model and benchmark of a disciplined society dominated by masculine virtue, not given to (Athenian-style) luxury or weakness but to simple living, inured to hardship and pain, and ready to die rather than violate ancestral laws (*Apion* 2.225; cf. Ollier 1933; Tigerstedt 1974; Hodkinson and Powell 1994, 273–346). Related language concerns manliness or courage (*andreia*, *andrizô*, *andragathia*), endurance and fortitude (*karteria*), discipline or regimen of life (*askêsis*, *diaita*), and contempt for death (*thanatou kataphronêsis*). Although the highest concentration of these terms is in the description of the Essenes (2.119–161), it turns up frequently elsewhere. Consider a few examples:

4.89–90 [Vespasian rests his soldiers in Caesarea before the final campaign]: For he saw that a good deal of work remained in the vicinity of Jerusalem ... And he reckoned that even without walls, the determination of the [Judean] men and their daring actions would be difficult to cope with. So he trained his soldiers just like athletes for contests.

5.315–316: The Judeans, for their part, careless of their sufferings, were intent solely on the damage they could inflict, and death itself seemed to them trivial if it meant attacking and killing one of the enemy. Titus, by contrast, took as much care for the security (*asphaleias*) of his soldiers as for success. Saying that the reckless charge was foolish, and that it was only valor if accompanied by forethought and avoiding the risk of casualty, he directed his side to show their manliness in ways that posed no risk to themselves (*en akindunôi tôi kata sphas ekeleusen andrizesthai*).

6.11–14 [Of the Roman legionaries]: ... Their bodies were by now falling beneath their labors, their souls in the face of repeated reverses. ... Worst of all was the discovery that the Judeans possessed a fortitude of soul (*to parastêma tês psychês*) superior to faction, famine, war, and such disasters. They [Romans] began to suppose that the attacks of these men were irresistible, that their cheerfulness in distress was invincible.

6.42–44 [Titus to his *elite* forces]: "How shameful if the Judeans, for whom defeat carries no real shame since they have learned to be slaves, should ... hold death in contempt (*thanatou kataphronein*) and repeatedly strike at our middles—not in hope of triumph, but for the raw demonstration of their manly courage (*alla dia psilên epideixin andreias*)—whereas you, who control more or less all the land and sea, ... should not even once venture into the enemy's ranks."

It appears therefore that Josephus's famous digression on the Roman legions, accompanying Vespasian's arrival in the land (3.70–109), has a partly ironic function. It declares that the Romans have never been beaten, no matter what ruses, tactics, terrain, or numbers have opposed them (3.106). They absorb the shocks of battle with equanimity, never panicked (3.74). On the one hand, this assures his audiences that the Judeans were beaten by the very best (3.108: "for the consolation of those who have been bested"). On the other hand, it sets up the following narrative of legionary confusion, ill discipline, and temporary failure to bring forward the virtues of the Judeans.

Second, when Josephus arranges his wording to begin his narrative with the political hot-word *stasis*, or "civil strife," in the moments before the Hasmonean revolt (1.31), he signals his deep familiarity with a discourse in *polis* management and illness that goes back to Plato and Aristotle on the philosophical side, and Thucydides among historians. Profoundly suspicious of democracy, he assumes a world of *poleis* (citizen states) administered in the best interests of the populace, though not by them; rather, by the leading, powerful, or notable men (*hoi prôtoi, aristoi, gnôrimoi, dunatoi*). These are omni-competent aristocrats like Josephus, who come from great families and are educated for leadership in all its forms, not for grubby commerce or technical expertise. The same men become, as circumstances require, advocates, judges, orators, military commanders, political leaders, priests of the civic cults (hereditary in Judea), major landowners, and writers. Their principal task is to keep the lumpen rabble (*to plêthos*, sometimes *ho dêmos* or *ho laos*) quiescent. Dangers to concord (*homonoia*, opposite of *stasis*) come from many directions: rival *poleis* competing for status, hot-headed youths who respond from passion rather than political wisdom, women in general, demagogues who whip up the masses with rhetorical wizardry and promise things that cannot be realized (*goês/goêteia, apatê/apataô*), otherworldly fanatics, and violent men ("bandits"), often in the service of some resentful wealthy person (on Polybius, Eckstein 1995, 28–236).

A particularly rich thread in the Greco-Roman tradition, manipulated brilliantly by Josephus, concerns the nature of political "freedom" or "autonomy," on the one side, and "slavery" on the other. Paradoxes abound. Submission to Rome is undoubtedly a kind of slavery, and yet it may offer the best practical hope for internal self-regulation and preservation of the ancestral ways (*ta patria/ethê, ta nomima, hoi patrioi nomoi*). Demagogues typically rally the people with memories of glorious days past and vain hopes of both radical freedom and regional primacy. Like political losers everywhere, they play the justice/fairness card before the gullible, but what they actually offer is *slavery*—to their insatiable personal tyrannies. Throughout his writing, Josephus shows that he has thought much about the kind of *Realpolitik* that comes through the pages of Thucydides (whatever his own intentions may have been).

All of this was common coin in elite discussions of the day. Polybius had refashioned classical Greek discussions for the new situation of Greek political responses to Roman domination, and he was followed by the Hellenistic historians Diodorus and Dionysius. Josephus shows debts to all of them, as do his contemporaries Plutarch (*Mor.* [*Praec.*] 813d–816a, 819a, 824e–f) and Dio (*Orr.* 32, 38, 46). The main difference is that whereas Plutarch and Dio work fervently to prevent *poleis* of their day from tipping over into *stasis*, Josephus describes how the most famous *polis* of the time (thanks to Flavian propaganda) had gone over the edge, rather like Polybius’s Corinth two centuries earlier. He assumes the role of national spokesman, explaining these matters to audiences who should recognize the problems and the language.

Pervasive in ancient thinking (and evidently flourishing in western democracies) was the notion that the statesman managed the potentially volatile populace by appearing to share their sentiments—calling for justice, fairness, redress—while gradually bending them to a sounder view of things (see Plutarch, *Mor.* [*Praec.*] 800a–b). Since oratory was the principal tool for these purposes, the last thing one expected a statesman to declare in public speech was his heartfelt views: that was for prophets, whose role was to die, not for leaders (Liddell Hart 1941, 7–8). If we begin from such assumptions and values, though to earnest modern scholars they have reeked of sham and the author’s humbug, Josephus’s portraits of himself and his chief-priestly colleagues appear entirely plausible (though not for that reason accurate):

In Jerusalem, Ananus the chief priest and those of the powerful men who were not sympathetic to the Romans were preparing the walls and many war machines. Throughout the whole city, projectiles and body armour were being forged. ... Ananus, nonetheless, harboured the intention of bending the insurgents and the recklessness of those called “Disciples” [Zealots] to the more beneficial course, as he gradually sidelined the preparations for war. But he succumbed to the violence. ... (2.648–651)

This is not to say that political leaders felt no sense of honor. On the contrary, a decent leader should identify himself with the welfare of the *polis* to the extent that he is willing to die for it if necessary, even in a conflict he has not chosen. That selfless desire to pilot the ship of state to a safer harbor justifies his use of misleading appearances and rhetoric (cf. *War* 4.248–250, 319–321).

Another fertile theme in the political sphere has to do with fortune, or the circumstances that just come one’s way, and its reversals (*tychês/pragmatôn metabolai*). Polybius affirmed history’s value to statesmen as the best aid for “bearing nobly the reversals of fortune” (1.1.2), and his narrative is filled with such reversals (1.4.5, 35.2; 2.4.3–4, 7.1–2; 18.28.4–5; 39.8.2 [40.12.19]). In Josephus’s *Judean War*, fortune language also turns up in seminal situations. Against the background of Rome’s constant upheavals (1.5, 23) come

reversals suffered by: Jerusalem, the greatest and happiest city now fallen to its nadir (1.11); various Roman, Seleucid, Hasmonean, and Herodian figures (e.g., 1.95, 270, 282, 353; 2.113); and Josephus the captured general himself (3.394–395). Josephus epitomizes the problem in the bad emperors Gaius and Nero, who did not realize what they owed to fortune and so abused or outraged it (“*exubrisen eis tēn tychēn*,” 2.184, 250).

This vulnerability of humanity to reversals of fortune could equally be connected with tragedy, the third thematic cluster. Aristotle made pity and fear the hallmarks of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b, 1452b, 1453a-b, 1456b). Scholars used to think that “tragic history” was a recognized sub-genre, taking their cue from Polybius’s attack on Phylarchus for failing to distinguish one from the other (2.56.6–7):

Being keen to *elicit pity* in his readers and *generate sympathy* by his words, he weaves tapestries of women and dishevelled hair and their breasts slipping out; to these he adds the tears and lamentations of both men and women being led off [to slavery]—all together with children and aged parents. He does this throughout his whole history, always trying to place the horrors in each situation before our eyes.

Although it is agreed now that Phylarchus had not written in a tragic sub-genre (McDonald 1975, 4; Marincola 2003), that conclusion is part of an increasing recognition that we should not make rigid genre distinctions generally in ancient literature. The same authors were writing across genres, and saw no problem intermingling history, geography, ethnography, biography, rhetoric, and indeed prose tragedy (Clarke 1999; Shahar 2004).

Josephus’s *Judean War*, at any rate, has a tragic ethos. The prologue awakens potent themes of pity, compassion, and lament over the fate of nation and mother-city (*War* 1.10–12). The key words here (*eleos, olophysis, oiktos/ oiktizô/oikteirô*) reoccur some 115 times in the narrative. Josephus unconvincingly begs pardon for allowing his passions (*pathê*) to intrude. Weeping women and children are everywhere in his story. In the first volume, King Herod establishes the framework (note the language of *drama*: 1.471, 530, 543) as a strong and proud man whose very virtues and way of being—including his passion for his wife and a Fortune that must exact revenge for his prosperity—cause his downfall (esp. 429–432, 556). Chapman (1998) has demonstrated Josephus’s debt to classical tragedy in specific episodes, especially in the story of Maria’s cannibalism (6.193–219). As that story of a particular *pathos* (“case of suffering,” 6.214) illustrates, Josephus can play with specific words. At the end of the story (6.217), he puns on *ptôma*, which usually means “downfall, collapse” or secondarily “fallen person, corpse.” *Judean War* has the word often (e.g., 1.594; 3.249; 5.18, 34, 440; 5.516, 541, 570; 6.2, 110; but 6.30), but mostly in the special tragic sense of *corpse* (Euripides, *Heracl.* 77; *Herc.* 1228; *El.* 575, 686; *Phoen.* 1482, 1697; *Troi.*

467). *Judean War*’s tragic ethos also offers Josephus a point of intersection, which he fully exploits, with the biblical tradition of lament associated with Jeremiah (Cohen 1982).

Judean War’s tragic atmosphere cannot be separated from our final group of themes, connected with cultic pollution and purification. Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* revolves around a case of pollution (*miasma*) that must be driven from the land: “it is blood-guilt that keeps the *polis* in a storm” (*Oed. Rex* 97–103). The later volumes of *Judean War*, similarly, speak often of the pollution of Jerusalem’s sacred precincts through bloodshed and of the need for a purging by fire. Josephus foreshadows that catastrophe early by presenting a scene just after Herod’s death in which Passover pilgrims become sacrificial victims themselves (2.10–13, 30, 197). Passover, the ultimate celebration of freedom (from Egyptian slavery, 4.402), becomes the main locus of bloodshed, captivity, and final destruction (Colautti 2002; Siggelkow-Berner 2011). In this way, Josephus reinforces the paradox of a drive for ostensible “freedom” from Rome that turns Judeans into victims (2.209, 264, 443; 4.177–178, 394). Here is a representative passage (5.17–19):

Those who had hurried from the ends of the earth to this renowned sacred site themselves fell before their sacrifices, and honored an altar universally revered by Greeks and barbarians with a libation from their own slaughter. Foreign bodies kneaded themselves together with the local dead, commoners also with priests, and the blood from corpses of all provenance flowed into pools in the divine precincts. Most miserable city, what have you suffered comparable to this from the Romans, who came in purging with fire your own internal defilements?

Although Josephus writes history, then, we cannot isolate this as a genre free of tragedy and powerful rhetoric.

1.6 Speech and Speeches

The question of rhetoric leads us finally to Josephus’s great speeches in the *Judean War*. Which ones count as “great” may be debated, but there are seven set-piece orations of significant size:

2.346–401	King Agrippa II on the folly of war with Rome
3.362–382	Josephus, trapped by comrades at Iotapata, against suicide
4.163–192	Ananus harangues the populace against the Zealots/Disciples
4.238–269	Jesus to the Idumaeans outside Jerusalem; Simon the Idumaeon replies

5.376–419	Josephus outside Jerusalem on the pacific tradition of Judean history
6.93–110	Josephus’s “Hebrew” speech on behalf of Titus to John
7.341–388	Eleazar b. Yair at Masada on the need for self-destruction

Whatever Thucydides meant in describing his contradictory criteria for including speeches—adhering as closely as possible to what was actually said, and keeping it appropriate to the occasion (1.22.1)—his willingness to craft orations for his characters lent legitimacy to the art. By Josephus’s time, speeches were the expected place for historians to show off their rhetorical skills (Polybius 12.25a.4–5, 25i–26b; Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 58). Only grumpy purists excluded them (Polybius 36.1.1–7; Pompeius Trogus in Justin, *Epit.* 38.3.11). Although Polybius was one of those, in this respect, Josephus did not follow him.

As they stand, Josephus’s speeches are his creations. We can tell this immediately from the similarity of language, form, and theme from one speaker to another (Lindner 1972, 40–48; Rajak 1991, 124–125; Runnalls 1997; Price 2007). Three aspects that reoccur are: (1) the proposition that God and fortune are *now* with the Romans, whom it is futile to oppose; (2) the realist recognition that, with everyone now “slaves” of Rome (cf. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 34.51), the Judeans are in no position to rebel against such power; and (3) the culpability of those would who lead the nation into a futile and ruinous war. The question posed by speakers as different as King Agrippa, Josephus, and Eleazar, is not what is right or even abstractly honorable, but rather what is advantageous, beneficial, and safe for the nation (2.346, 401; cf. Thucydides 5.89; Polybius 21.32c). None of this expresses a love of Rome as such (cf. 2.352, 355), but rather pragmatic politics conducted with as much honor as circumstances permit.

Understandably enough, given these commonalities, scholars have looked to the speeches as Josephus’s vehicles of choice for expressing his own ideas, whether these were thought to involve propaganda for Rome (Thackeray 1929, 43–45; Saulnier 1991) or something more independently Judean (Lindner 1972, 17–48; Gabba 1976–1977; Stern 1987, 76–77). Here I would urge caution.

For one thing, Josephus appears to have had little constraint in what he chose to include outside the speeches, and how he structured and composed it. The more important reason is that, in keeping with his assumptions about political leadership (above), Josephus conveys a deep suspicion of rhetoric, which he shared with philosophers, Spartans, and old-school Romans. There is no space to elaborate this point, but I would draw attention to three relevant features of the speeches in *Judean War*.

First, the middle speech indicated above is actually two. Josephus deliberately crafts powerful speeches for opposing characters to show the plausibility of each, quite apart from considerations of truth (cf. Korah and Moses in *Ant.* 4.15–25). This technique of paired speeches, found already in Thucydides and Sallust, puts oratory in its place as a tool that can be used by both good and bad men (cf. *Life* 40), or indeed by good men who disagree.

Second, *Judean War*'s orators resort to speechifying in desperate situations. Agrippa is trapped by the demand for an embassy to Nero—intended, notice, to prove to the emperor that Jerusalem is *not* in revolt (2.342–344). Politically unable to oblige his people, he delivers a brilliant, tear-jerking effort on the folly of war with Rome. Nice, the audience replies, but not exactly on topic (2.402). Josephus and Eleazar are driven to oratory to convince hostile audiences as lives hang in the balance. Most of *Judean War*'s speeches contain obvious distortions of reality, in keeping with the well-known nature of rhetoric: Agrippa claiming that the rest of the empire reposes in happy tranquillity under Rome; Josephus insisting that Judean tradition has always been pacifist; Eleazar brilliantly inverting Josephus's speech against suicide with the case for it.

Third, Josephus highlights the slipperiness of speech by having his characters first attempt a pithy confrontation of their audience. Only when that fails do they resort to the fancy talk (3.354, 361; 5.360–375; 6.96–98; 7.332–339). Either the oratory produces results (5.420–421, 6.112–115, 7.389), or the speaker must employ even more devious moves (3.383–388). Most impressive is the example of Eleazar at Masada. Having gathered “the bravest” of his men and told them the simple truth that their principles required them now to kill their families and themselves, with the Romans at the door, many begin bawling and howling in womanish grief (7.337–339). Exasperated by this lot, Eleazar decides to pull out the stops and give them a fine oration on life, death, and the soul—by way of Indian self-immolation. Sure enough, he is unable to finish before the same men rush eagerly to kill their loved ones. So vulnerable are they to clever speaking (7.389–392).

Josephus thus appears to view oratory as a characteristically *Greek* and un-Judean technical skill (*War* 1.13, 16; *Ant.* 20.263–264; *Life* 40), rather like a drug that will certainly work but is best avoided if possible. Men of honor and *gravitas*, who care most about laws and truth, speak through their actions. As an author, Josephus can of course produce a rhetorical *tour de force* on demand. Whereas bad characters have only shiny speech, he has much more, and good character above all.

1.7 Conclusion

The *Judean War* deserves its place among the most influential ancient western texts, though not for the reasons that caused it to survive. In it we see a Judean aristocrat living in Rome and writing in Greek in the decade following the destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus manages the extraordinary feat of meshing his native traditions with Greek political, rhetorical, and historiographical discourses, while yet distancing himself from “the Greeks” to cement the bond with his host society. He charts the interplay of Roman and Judean cultures over a quarter of a millennium to explain how, though the Romans have favored Judean dominance in southern Syria and Jerusalem’s leaders have always trusted them, that consensus ruptured under the pressure of age-old local rivalries. These grew unmanageable after the failure of Herodian succession, especially when Nero sent his loathsome agent Florus, who blindly fell in with the Samaritans. Despairing of redress, the Judeans understandably if unwisely turned to self-help. Their resulting civil strife produced native tyrants, who propelled the city to destruction. The Flavians now in power are men of character, unlike Nero (cf. 3.1–3). They respect the Judean character, which gave them such difficulties on the battlefield—and which Josephus embodies. One can only lament the whole miserable legacy of Nero, in Rome as in Judea, and draw a line under it now, with men of character ascendant.

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CHAPTER 2

Many Sources but a Single Author: *Josephus's Jewish Antiquities*

Daniel R. Schwartz

2.1 A Chronologically Organized Survey

Antiquities (Greek: *archaiologia*) is the title Josephus himself uses (e.g., *Life* 430 and *Apion* 1.1, 54; see Sterling 1992, 245) for his work that recounts, in twenty books, the history of the Jews from the creation of the world until 66 C.E. The work, completed in 93/94 C.E. (as Josephus tells us in *Ant.* 20.267; on the possibility of a later edition see Barish 1978; Sievers 2001; and Mason, *Life*, [Chapter 3](#) in this volume), seems to be modeled in the image of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities*, produced a century or so earlier; it too was divided into twenty books. Although for the first half of the work, which is on the biblical period, Josephus was dependent on the Bible and only rarely had access to sources beyond it, for the latter half, on the Second Temple period, his work is often our only source for the events that he reports. Indeed, even when there are other sources, frequently it is only with the help of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* that we can discover their context.

Thus, for example, the Gospels mention Pontius Pilate, and the Acts of Apostles ([Chapters 23–24](#)) mention Felix, but it is only *Jewish Antiquities* that allows us to date those two Roman governors of Judea: chronological data about the former appear at *Jewish Antiquities* 18.35, 89, and 177, and about the latter at 20.137–138, and nothing similar appears anywhere else, including Josephus's own *Jewish War*. Similarly, when a Qumran text referring to the “Lion of Wrath” who “hung alive” his Jewish enemies after a failed invasion of Judea by “King Demetrius of Greece” was discovered in the 1950s, it was only with the help of Josephus's report in *Jewish Antiquities* 13.376–380, which tells the full story of Demetrius III's failed invasion of Judea in the days of Alexander Jannaeus (88 B.C.E.) and reports that the Jewish king crucified his Jewish enemies, that the text could be placed in its historical context (see Horgan 1979, 172–179, on *4Q Pesher Nahum*, frags. 3–4, col. 1).

The period of history surveyed in the *Jewish Antiquities* ends with the outbreak of the Judean rebellion against Rome in 66 C.E., since that rebellion is the subject of Josephus's other major work, the *Jewish War*. Accordingly, at the end of *Jewish Antiquities* 20 (259) he refers his readers to his earlier work and concludes his narrative with the hope to return and write a new

work taking history down to his own day (267); a similar hope might be indicated by various promises late in *Jewish Antiquities* (17.28; 19.366; 20.48, 53, 96, 144, 147), to report events that occurred years after the outbreak of the rebellion. However, some of those promises might be copied from his sources, and, in any case, it seems that Josephus never wrote such a continuation, except to the extent his own post-70 circumstances are described in the concluding paragraphs of his *Life*—a work that Josephus presents as an appendix to the *Jewish Antiquities* (see *Ant.* 20.266 and *Life* 430; see Mason, *Life*, [Chapter 3](#), in this volume). Similarly, Josephus never fulfilled his oft-expressed hope of writing a special treatise on Jewish law (*Ant.* 1.25, 192, 214, etc.; 4.198; 20.268), unless that is how he considered his *Against Apion* (see Petersen 1958 and Altshuler 1978/79).

The twenty books of *Jewish Antiquities* are organized in chronological order (as has been especially emphasized by Gera 2011). Usually the breakdown into books follows the transition from one central character to the next. Thus, for some examples, Book 1 ends with the death of Isaac and Book 2 opens “after the death of Isaac”; Book 4 ends with the death of Moses and Book 5 opens with Joshua’s succession to leadership in his stead; Book 6 ends with the death of Saul and Book 7 opens with what was done by his successor, David, upon hearing of it; Book 11 ends with the death of Alexander the Great and Book 12 opens with the struggles among Alexander’s immediate successors; Book 17 ends with Augustus’s deposition of Herod’s son and successor, Archelaus, and Book 18 opens with the appointment of a Roman governor for the territory Archelaus had ruled; Book 19 ends with the death of Agrippa I and Book 20 opens, “After the death of Agrippa.”

The structure of *Jewish Antiquities* may be represented as follows:

Opening Prologue: 1.1–26	
Biblical history, down to the end of the Persian Period (see Sterling 1992, 248–249)	
Book 1	From Creation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Book 2	From Joseph to the Exodus from Egypt
Books 3, 4	Israelites in the desert, to death of Moses
Book 5	Joshua and Judges
Books 6, 7	Saul and David
Books 8–10Book 11	Kings of Judah and Israel, from Solomon to end of Babylonian ExilePersian Period, to death of Alexander the Great
Post-biblical history	
Book 12	Hellenistic period, to the death of

	Judas Maccabaeus
Books 13, 14	Hasmonean period, to Herod's successful rise to power
Books 15–17	Herodian period, to the expulsion of Herod's son and heir, Archelaus
Books 18–20	Direct Roman rule of Judea
Closing materials	
Book 20:224–251	Appendix: Summary of history of high priestly succession
Book 20:252–268	Concluding remarks

This fundamentally chronological orientation of *Jewish Antiquities* is evident not only in its basic structure, but also in numerous formulations. Frequently Josephus introduces a new episode by noting that it occurred “just at the same time,” “after that,” “not long thereafter” or the like—a point that explains why he placed the material where he did. Similarly, comparison of Josephus’s narratives with his sources often points up the efforts that he made to present materials in their chronological order. Thus, as we can see in some examples:

1. According to Genesis 18:20–33, after God announced to Abraham that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are very sinful, Abraham argued with God that He should not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. This all presumes some prior wicked behavior by the Sodomites, but readers have not yet heard of it. The way the Bible tells the story, it is only in [Chapter 19](#) that we hear of the Sodomites’ totally despicable treatment of visitors to their city and so we may then infer, retrospectively, that it was previous instances of such behavior that had brought God to decide to destroy the city. True, readers of the Bible might recall the passing comment, at Genesis 13:13, that the Sodomites were very sinful, but that came five chapters earlier and had no context. Josephus, in his version of Genesis 13, omits that passing notice but does promise readers (at *Ant.* 1.170) that he will tell them, “at the proper place” (*kata chōran*) why Sodom was later destroyed (1.170); and then, when he got to Genesis 18, he placed, at the very beginning of his report of the exchange between God and Abraham about Sodom, the notice that the Sodomites were insolent toward men and impious toward God insofar as they treated foreigners terribly (1.194), which is based on Genesis 19. That is: Josephus omitted a notice (Gen 13:13) that did not function in its context but replaced it by a promise to return to the fate of Sodom, and when he did the latter, he told the events in their historical order (sinful Sodomites aroused God’s ire), not in the order in which his biblical source offered them. That is quite a lot of editorial work in order to present these materials in their proper order.
2. 1 Maccabees 12:6–18 cites a letter from Jonathan to the Spartans that quotes, as an appendix (vv. 19–23), a much earlier letter from a Spartan

king to a Jewish high priest. In his paraphrase of 1 Maccabees, Josephus indeed brought the main letter into the context of his account of Jonathan (*Ant.* 13.166–170), but cited its appendix at a much earlier point in his narrative (12.226–227), where he thought it belonged chronologically.

3. Similarly, at 12.237, Josephus reports what happened when Onias IV was an infant, promising to tell “each of the matters that concern this boy in its proper place” (*kata chōran*), as at 1.170; this and similar phrases, such as *kata kairon* (“at the proper occasion”) are frequent, and remind readers of Josephus’s concern to recount events in their proper chronological order. Indeed, at 12.387–388 he gives the next installment of this story, taking it down to Onias’s flight to Egypt and construction of a temple there, and there too he promises to tell more “at a more appropriate occasion.” Finally, at 13.62–73, he relates yet a later chapter of this story in what was, he asserts, its chronological context.
4. The chronological focus of *Jewish Antiquities* is especially evident when it is contrasted with *Jewish War*. Note, for example, that in *Jewish War* Josephus reported all of Herod’s building projects in one long chapter (*War* 1, [Chapter 21](#) = 1.401–430) and gives next to no dates for them, while in *Jewish Antiquities* he reports different projects in different chronological contexts (just as he did, in the previous example, with the successive stages of Onias’s story). Thus, Herodion (*Ant.* 15.323–325) is dated to the time of Herod’s marriage with Mariamme, the daughter of Simon; the construction of Caesarea (15.331–341) is reported to have taken twelve years (15.341); work on the temple of Jerusalem (15.380–425) began in the eighteenth year of Herod’s reign (15.380); work on Antipatris (16.142–145) began after the dedication of Caesarea (16.142), of which, according to the precise chronological details in 16.136 (which apparently contradict that at 15.341), the work had taken ten years, being completed “in the 28th year of Herod’s reign, which fell in the 192nd Olympiad.” More generally, note that while there are ten Olympiadic dates in *Jewish Antiquities*, scattered around Books 12–16, only one appears in *Jewish War* (at 1.415). Thus, for example, though *Jewish War* 1.149 and 351 refer to the length of Pompey’s and Herod’s sieges of Jerusalem, neither gives explicit data about the years in which they conquered the city; at *Jewish Antiquities* 14.66 and 14.487 Josephus carefully notes both the names of the consuls, and the number of the Olympiadic years. Readers of *Jewish Antiquities* expect this type of data, which keeps them up to date according to the book’s basic structure; for some more examples, see 1.82, 104; 2.318; 4.327; 5.117; 9.242; 13.301 (where Josephus apparently confused the return from the Babylonian exile

with its beginning), etc.

5. At *Jewish Antiquities* 18.166, Josephus reports that “the emperor Tiberius” asked Agrippa to befriend his grandson, Tiberius Gemellus. The formulation of that reference to Tiberius is strangely full, even otiose, given the fact that the preceding paragraphs regularly refer to “the emperor” or plain “Tiberius.” Why should Josephus offer this fuller formulation, as if otherwise we would not know which emperor or which Tiberius was meant? The explanation, it seems, is that, in writing up a later part of his story, Josephus found in his source a report that Tiberius was angry at Agrippa for having attached himself to Gaius Caligula, contrary to his own (Tiberius’s) request, obviously at an earlier point in time, that he take care of his grandson, Tiberius Gemellus. Josephus retained that in his story (at 18.188) but also inserted a reference to the emperor’s earlier request at the appropriate earlier point in the narrative (18.166). As any writer who makes insertions here and there into extant drafts knows, however, it is very difficult to do so without violating, one way or another, the demands of proper style with regard to the differential use of full names, shortened names, and pronouns. Thus, for example, at *Jewish Antiquities* 13.282 Josephus refers to “the high priest Hyrcanus” although the preceding paragraphs used plain “Hyrcanus”; Josephus’s fuller reference here probably reflects his use, here, of a traditional source, also preserved in rabbinic literature (t. Soṭah 13:5 [ed. Lieberman 1973, 231–232]), that told the story without a broader narrative context about Hyrcanus. So too at *Jewish Antiquities* 18.166, the anomalous naming of the emperor apparently testifies that Josephus, when retrospectively inserting that which he inferred from the source he used at 18.188, in order to make his story adhere to proper chronology, failed to integrate his reference to the emperor into its context.

The chronological orientation of the work is, finally, underlined by the appendix on the history of the high priesthood (*Ant.* 20.224–251). This survey, strategically placed at the end of the work, is built according to a pronouncedly chronological scheme: it breaks all of Jewish history down into successive periods and tabulates, for each, how many years they lasted and how many high priests served in each period. This very clearly leaves, in readers’ minds, the fact that the work they have completed reading is one that addresses successive historical periods.

2.2 A Work Written on the Basis of Extracts from Numerous Sources

There is much obvious evidence for Josephus's use of sources, as should only be expected of an historian surveying "the history of five thousand years" (*Ant.* 1.13 and *Apion* 1.1). For the first eleven books of *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus's dependence upon the Hebrew Bible is clear, though the question of which version(s) he used is not always clear (see Schalit 1944, xxvi–xxxvi; Begg 1993, 2–5, 271–276; and Feldman 1998, 23–36), and though it is quite clear that he supplemented the biblical record now and then with material drawn from other sources, of which some twenty are mentioned by name. Of the latter, Josephus may have read some of them first-hand, while in other cases it seems likely that he read them only through the mediation of Nicolas of Damascus, who is cited along with the others (so *Ant.* 1.94–95, 107–108, 158–159), just as we know that Nicolas was a major source for later books of the *Jewish Antiquities*. In Books 12–13, similarly, a long section (12.11–118) based on the *Letter of Aristeas* is followed by an even longer section (approx. 12.241–13.214) based upon 1 Maccabees. After that the identity of Josephus's sources becomes somewhat hazier, and has been the subject of much research, but it is usually assumed, for good reason, that much of Books 14–17 is based upon the work of Nicolas of Damascus, Herod's court historian, whom Josephus indeed cites several times in this section of his work (14.9, 68, 104; 16.29ff., 58, 183, etc.; see Stern 1974–1984, 1.227–233 and Toher 2003, 2009). Two long dossiers of Roman documents in those books, however, at *Jewish Antiquities* 14.186–267 and 16.162–178, might have been assembled by Josephus himself, or by some assistant(s), perhaps with the help of correspondents in local Jewish communities around the Roman Diaspora, to which many of the documents pertain (see Ben Zeev 1998, 388–408). Books 18–20 seem to be more of a patchwork, in which one can identify some long stories as deriving, ultimately, from disparate sources that can be characterized if not identified: one or more that focused on the history of the Jews of Mesopotamia (18.310–379 and 20.17–96, on which, see Herman 2006), a long Roman account of the assassination of Gaius Caligula and Claudius's ascent to the throne (19.1–273), materials that pertain to various Herodian rulers, and the high priestly chronicle that closes the work (20.224–251). Beyond these sources, which served Josephus for long stretches of his work, numerous others can be identified: some that he mentions by name (such as the stories he cites from Agatharcides at 12.5–6, from Timagenes [via Strabo] at 13.319, from Herod's memoirs [whatever they were] at 15.165–174, etc.) and others that can be surmised. Here are three examples of the latter type:

1. Josephus tells at *Ant.* 14.41–45 a story so very similar to one told by Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* 40.2) that it must be either that Josephus used Diodorus's account or—given various differences in details—that both used a common source (Stern 1974–1984, 1.185–87).

2. Since many of the stories Josephus tells sound like Jewish folk traditions and are indeed paralleled by rabbinic literature (Cohen 1986; Kalmin 2005), and in some cases he even introduces them by saying that “it is said that” (e.g., 13.282//t. Soṭah 13:5 [ed. Lieberman 1973, 231–232]); 15.367//b. Baba Batra 4a) or refers to them as stories “which our fathers have handed on to us” (15.425//b. Ta’anit 22b–23a), it is likely that he knew them from Jewish oral tradition (see [Chapter 18](#) by Nakman in this volume).
3. Since Josephus’s accounts of Pilate and Cumanus (18.55–89 and 20.105–136) are much longer than those of other Roman governors of Judea, and those two are the only governors of whom he reports that they were sent to Rome to give accounts of themselves (18.89; 20.132–136), it is likely that he had access to their briefs or other materials occasioned by their hearings. That likelihood is, it seems, bolstered by analysis of the tendencies of these materials (see Schwartz 2007, 2012).

A special issue concerning Josephus’s sources is the question whether in writing those parts of *Jewish Antiquities* 12–20 that have parallels in his *Jewish War* 1–2 he consulted the latter work or, rather, its sources. As with the question of the version(s) of the Bible he used, it seems that the same answer need not apply to all cases (see Cohen 1979, 48–66 and Krieger 2002).

2.3 Josephus Organized the Extracts Chronologically, According to Successions of Rulers

Taken together, these first two sections indicate that Josephus built his survey of Jewish history by organizing extracts from sources chronologically. This structure was a very convenient one, for it allowed Josephus not only to collect but also to present very disparate materials without much attention to common topics and themes. Anything he collected and wanted to include—mostly materials about Jews, but also other materials indirectly connected with them—was grist to his mill and could easily be placed wherever he thought it belonged. To understand how Josephus worked, it seems best to imagine him collecting materials, from different sources, and arranging them in whatever was the first-century’s equivalent of a shoebox, which he had prepared by filling it with successive dividers labeled according to the chronological sub-divisions of each historical period. These were defined by successions of rulers. Thus, in the biblical period, Josephus followed dynasties of kings, retelling their stories but also inserting the stories of prophets, or others, into the “chapter” devoted to the king in whose realm they functioned; in the post-biblical period, in which there were no Jewish kings,

Josephus used the high priestly succession the same way; and eventually the names of the successive Roman governors of Judea served the same purpose. After collecting his disparate materials this way, he could write them up sequentially according to the periods he defined. This procedure is often obvious, for example:

1. When Josephus found in the writings of Nicolas of Damascus a passage pertaining to Abraham, or, in the writings of Berossus, a passage relating to Nebuchadnezzar, he could confidently file them along with his biblical materials about Abraham and Nebuchadnezzar, respectively, and, eventually, include them in those chapters of his *Jewish Antiquities* (1.159–160 and 10.226). Indeed, as 10.227–228 shows, Josephus collected material about Nebuchadnezzar from several other writers as well; only after he presents what he found in their works does he move on to the next divider, opening a new paragraph (10.229) with “After the death of Nezzarbuchadnezzar ...”
2. Since Josephus knew that the Bible (2 Kings 14:25) placed the prophet Jonah in the days of King Jeroboam, the son of Joash, it was easy for the historian to “file” his summary of the Book of Jonah in the context of his retelling of Joash’s reign, based upon 2 Kings 14 (*Ant.* 9.208–214).
3. Similarly, Josephus places his story of Nahum at *Jewish Antiquities* 9.239–242, in the midst of a narrative otherwise built on 2 Kings 15//2 Chronicles 26, introducing it with “there was at that time.” But in this case there is no obvious biblical justification similar to 2 Kings 14:25 for the Jonah story.
4. Since the biblical book of Ruth concludes by identifying its heroine as the great-grandmother of King David, who was anointed by Samuel, it was an easy deduction for Josephus that her story should be placed in the context of his chapter on the high priest Eli (*Ant.* 5.318ff.), for Eli was old when Samuel was still a child (1 Samuel 1:22).
5. At *Jewish Antiquities* 13.171–173, Josephus interrupts his paraphrase of 1 Maccabees 12 with three paragraphs that deal with Jewish sects and their disagreement concerning the issue of free will versus determinism. This passage, which seems to have nothing to do with its context, “is placed there without being overly justified from an historiographic point of view” (Villalba i Varneda 1986, 177–178), but Josephus—who, for whatever reason, was convinced that these sects existed in the period in question—explained his placement of the passage at this point simply by noting, at the outset, that they existed “at this time.” We may infer that Josephus had filed his item on the sects behind the divider labeled “Jonathan,” in the midst of material otherwise based upon 1 Maccabees 9–12. It is tantalizing to wonder

what else was said about the sects, in the context where Josephus found this information, that led him to infer that it related to the days of Jonathan.

6. At *Jewish Antiquities* 11.158, in the course of his account of the Persian period, Josephus reports the succession of Eliashib to the high priesthood. Then he goes on to tell, at great length, the stories of Nehemiah (11.159–183) and Esther (11.184–296). Immediately after concluding the latter, Josephus tells a story from the days of a high priest named Joannes (Johanan), introducing it as follows in 11.297: “Upon the death of the high priest Eliashib his son Jodas succeeded to the high priesthood. When he too died the office was taken over by his son Joannes, through him ...,” there then comes the story about Joannes. Here we clearly see that Josephus used “dividers” according to the names of high priests. While he had materials which he thought (for whatever reason) belonged to the days of Eliashib and Joannes, he had nothing in his shoebox for the days of Jodas but nevertheless retained his name in the narrative, for it represented a period of historical time.
7. At *Jewish Antiquities* 18.33–35, Josephus recounts the days of the Judean governorship of Valerius Gratus. But apart from dating his appointment to office to the beginning of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, all Josephus reports are appointments and removals of high priests. It seems evident that Josephus had a divider for this governor’s term of office but the only material he filed after it, in this case, derived from high priestly records, such as the lists he used at 11.297 (above), mentions at *Against Apion* 1.36, alludes to at *Jewish Antiquities* 13.78, and summarizes at *Jewish Antiquities* 20.224–251.

If, then, *Jewish Antiquities* is a chronologically organized survey of Jewish history, pieced together from excerpts culled from numerous sources, for us to understand the work, we must ask whether, to what extent, and how Josephus produced a true composition of his own. To what extent should we view him, in this work, as a compiler, and to what extent as an author, despite the fact that he used numerous and disparate sources? And to the extent he did function as an author: What values and goals guided him in creating his work?

2.4 Sometimes Josephus Left His Excerpts Undigested

Let it be said at the outset that at times Josephus failed to coordinate his sources, and the compilatory nature of his work shines through—sometimes quite crassly. Two such cases, at *Jewish Antiquities* 18.166 and 13.282, were

cited above, in Section 1. Here are some others:

1. At *Jewish Antiquities* 14.145–148 Josephus cites a Roman document concerning “Hyrcanus the high priest” that has nothing to do with the topic that Josephus, in his introductory material (14.143–144), ascribes to it. Moreover, although Josephus cites the document in the context of his narrative about Hyrcanus II, in the forties of the first century B.C.E., it relates to a Jewish diplomat who was in fact active a century earlier (1 Maccabees 12:16 and 14:22), i.e., in the days of John Hyrcanus. The obvious conclusion is that Josephus erred concerning the identity of “Hyrcanus” and therefore placed the document a century too late, in the days of John’s grandson and namesake.
2. At *Jewish Antiquities* 14.74–76, Josephus praises Pompey for liberating Syrian cities from Jewish rule, but in 14.77–78, he bemoans the same event. Moreover, 14.74–76 assumes that each people has its own proper borders and Pompey, restoring that natural and just order, forced the Jews back into their borders so as to restore others to theirs, but 14.77 clearly assumes that it is fair to retain territories won in war. When we add in the facts that the former passage gives many details about the Syrian cities involved, refers to the Roman province of Syria as “the province” *par excellence*, and speaks of Jews in the third person, while the latter passage focuses only on what Pompey’s moves meant for the Jews, speaks of them in the first person, and concludes with an authorial promise to discuss Herod’s reign at a more appropriate occasion (*kata chōran*, 14.78, as above in [Section 2.1](#), points 1 and 3), it becomes obvious that the former passage is based, with but little editing, on something written by a Syrian, while the latter is Josephus’s own composition. The fact that Josephus, in nearby passages of *Jewish Antiquities* 14 (14.9, 68, 104), explicitly notes that he used the historical work of Nicolas of Damascus makes this conclusion all the more compelling.
3. Similarly, after reporting at *Jewish Antiquities* 14.170 that Hyrcanus II decided, under Roman pressure, that Herod would not be tried by the Sanhedrin, Josephus blithely goes on to report, at length, but with no transition or explanation, what happened in the Sanhedrin when Herod stood trial before it. That story focuses upon how Herod successfully intimidated the judges, apart from one who was exceptionally brave—and since a version of that story is preserved in the Talmud as well (b. Sanhedrin 19a–b, though there it is told about another stock royal villain, not about Herod; see Efron 1987, 190–197, 210–211), it seems that Josephus, who knew of the story from Jewish tradition, inserted it into his narrative which was based upon another source (Nicolas?), which had another explanation for how Herod escaped justice.
4. At *Jewish Antiquities* 18.160, Josephus reports that Alexander the

Alabarch (Philo's rich brother) promised Agrippa I, who was deeply in debt to the imperial treasury, a huge sum of money upon his arrival in Dicearcheia. The continuation, however, says nothing about any trip to Dicearcheia but does report, in the very next paragraph (18.161), that Agrippa went to Puteoli. Then, a few paragraphs later (18.165), Josephus reports that when Agrippa needed a huge sum of money to pay his debt to the imperial treasury he got it by taking a loan from a Roman noblewoman, Antonia Minor. Nothing is said of the money promised in Dicearcheia. When one realizes, however, both that Puteoli is the Latin name for Dicearcheia and that Alexander the Alabarch was the manager of Antonia's property (*Ant.* 19.276), it is easy to infer that what we have here is based on two different reports, from two different points of view, of the same transaction: one observer preferred the Latin name of the city and attributed the loan to Antonia, while the other used the Greek name and gave the credit to her agent (Schwartz 1990a, 2–11). Josephus juxtaposed the versions, without even the minimal amount of effort it would have taken him to unify the names used for the Italian city or at least to explain, as he did elsewhere (*Life* 16), that Puteoli and Dicearcheia are two names for the same city.

5. In *Jewish Antiquities* 20.103–104, Josephus offers the following collection of personalia:

(20.103) King Herod of Chalcis transferred Joseph the son of Kamei from the high priesthood and gave the position to Ananias the son of Nedebaeus in his stead. Cumanus came as the successor of Tiberius Alexander. (20.104) Herod, the brother of the great king Agrippa, died in the eighth year of the reign of Claudius Caesar, leaving three sons: Aristobulus (who had been born to him from his first wife) and—of Berenice, his brother's daughter—Berenicianus and Hyrcanus. Claudius Caesar gave his reign to the younger Agrippa.

Probably most people who read this assume that Josephus has carefully distinguished between two Herods. One was king of Chalcis and the other was Agrippa's brother, and Josephus used different terms to identify each and also separated his reports about them by interposing his report about Cumanus and Tiberius Alexander. The fact is, however, that they were one and the same person, as is clear at *Jewish Antiquities* 20.15, for example. The apparent explanation for the way Josephus's presentation at 20.103–104 suggests the opposite, or at least fails to make the identity clear, seems to be that he juxtaposed, without any effort to coordinate, a snippet from a high priestly chronicle, which referred to the king (who was supervisor of the temple, *Ant.* 20.15–16) as “King Herod of Chalcis,” and one from a Herodian chronicle, which identified Herod as Agrippa's brother.

2.5 Josephus Strove to Create Continuity in His Work, Especially at Transitions from One Topic to Another

Nevertheless, it is clear that, despite such failures here and there, Josephus strove to make his work his own—one that readers could read without feeling jerked around by its many moves among accounts deriving from different sources and, therefore, dealing with different topics and/or expressing different points of view. The simplest way Josephus did this was by adding, at the outset of a paragraph, some short transition that somehow coordinates between it and the preceding paragraph and thus allows readers to move easily from one to the next. This is apparent in the following examples:

1. After *Jewish Antiquities* 5.136–174 relates at length the sequence of events that culminated in the great suffering of the tribe of Benjamin, Josephus opens his account of the tribulations of the tribe of Dan with the following transition, unparalleled in his biblical source: “Similar suffering also befell the tribe of Dan”
2. After *Jewish Antiquities* 11.297–301 tells a story about the high priest Joannes and his brother, 11.302 opens the next story by reporting the death of Joannes and the succession of his son, Jaddus, to the high priesthood and immediately observing that “*he too* had a brother, named Manasses ...” Then Josephus proceeds to tell a story about the latter. This formulation creates a link between this story and the preceding one, despite the fact that the two stories are quite distinct one from the other and (though Josephus could not know what we know only by virtue of modern epigraphical discoveries), it seems that a few generations separated the two episodes (Schwartz 1990b).
3. Similarly, after *Jewish Antiquities* 18.39–52 tells a long story about Parthian history that opens with the statement that King Phraates had “died” (18.39), Josephus opens the next story at 18.53 with the notice that “there *also* died King Antiochus of Commagene.” Here “also” functions as “he too” in the preceding case. Cases like those are legion.

A second, more complex way to turn disparate narratives into a single composition involved the use of a leitmotif, repeated in more than one paragraph so as to lend them unity. For example:

1. After introducing his account of Korah’s rebellion by characterizing it as a *stasis* (internecine violence, civil war) unparalleled in the annals of mankind (*Ant.* 4.12), Josephus goes on to use *stasis* another five times, in various forms (4.13 [bis], 4.30, 4.32, 4.59), before ending the episode at 4.66 with the notice that the *stasis*, which had been at a high level for a long period of time, came to an end. Similarly, in the course of the account he uses *tarachē* (“confusion, unrest”) four times (4.22,

4.32, 4.35, 4.36) and *thorybos* (“tumult”) four more (4.22, 4.36, 4.37, 4.63). Together, these terms create a long unified chapter of turbulence—though no such words appear in the biblical basis of the account (Num. 16–17), neither in Hebrew nor in Greek.

2. At *Jewish Antiquities* 13.288, a few paragraphs after he concluded at 13.283 an account of the military successes of John Hyrcanus’s sons and of the divine voice that John himself was privileged to hear, Josephus reports that the *eupragia* (“doing well” = success) of John and his sons aroused jealousy and hostility among his Jewish subjects. Between those two sections, however, in 13.284–287, Josephus inserted a report, explicitly based upon Strabo, about the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, and Cyprus. Although what Josephus reports is about one particular episode, and nothing about it amounts especially to “doing well” or “success,” Josephus introduces it by remarking that “at that time it happened that not only the Jews of Jerusalem and the land (of Judea) were *eupragein* (doing well); so too were those who resided in Alexandria, in Egypt and in Cyprus.” Readers are thereby helped to slide smoothly from one topic to the next—just as the very last line of Josephus’s account of John Hyrcanus (13.300) sums up the whole chapter as a period of success (though here the term is not *eupragia* but only similar: *eutychia* – “good fortune”).
3. With the exception of his account of Jesus (*Ant.* 18.63–64), which is not authentic (see Whealey 2003 and her [Chapter 22](#) in this volume), all of Josephus’s reports about the days of Pontius Pilate use verbs or nouns of the Greek root *thoryb-*, thus characterizing the events as “tumults” (18.58, 18.62, 18.65, 18.85, 18.88). This creates a chapter with that theme, and as if to make sure it is noted Josephus begins the last of the episodes by introducing it as follows: “The Samaritan nation too was not free from tumult (*thorybos*)” (18.85). The use of this leitmotif both creates unity among materials that are quite diverse, including some that have nothing to do with Pilate and apparently come from what has been termed a Roman “scandal-chronicle” (Schemann 1887, 27–28). The use of the leitmotif also helps prepare the reader for the next step of Josephus’s story, the rise of Agrippa I, which opens shortly thereafter, by suggesting why Rome may have decided to give up direct provincial rule and instead restore a Herodian monarchy.
4. Somewhat later in *Jewish Antiquities* 18, Josephus concludes a story about Herod Antipas, his wife, and Gaius Caligula by summarizing, in 18.255, how the punishments imposed upon Herod and his wife were well deserved. That leaves us awaiting some parting comment about the third player, Gaius, and Josephus indeed turns to him in 18.256, opening with “as for Gaius.” That sounds as if Josephus is still

finishing off the preceding story, but in fact it opens a whole new and long story—one about Gaius and the Jews. By opening the new story with such a pivot Josephus lets his readers glide gently from one into the next. Moreover, Josephus made that transition all the smoother by the use of a leitmotif: the new story opens, in verse 256, by noting that Gaius ruled “magnanimously” (*megalophronōs*) during the first two years of his reign. That echoes the two appearances of the same word (once as adverb, once as adjective) in the final paragraphs of the preceding story (18.254–255).

A third way in which Josephus made an effort to ensure continuity in his narrative was by starting one story moving, so to speak, while still telling another, so that when he turns to the other story readers will have been expecting it already. For instance:

1. After beginning, in *Jewish Antiquities* 11.302–303, a story about high priests and Samaritans in Judea, Josephus pauses for a moment to note, in 11.304–305, the death of Philip II of Macedon and to start Alexander the Great on his way toward the Near East. That brief aside is obviously based upon some handbook dealing with Hellenistic history (to which Josephus alludes at the end of 11.305—“as has been related elsewhere”), which will hardly have also been his source for the detailed Judean story about high priests and Samaritans. Then Josephus reverts, in 11.306, to the latter, Judean, story—but when news arrives in 11.313 that “at this time” Alexander has shown up in Asia and is advancing eastward and nearing Syria, readers are already expecting him, not puzzled or upset by a sudden switch of focus. From the point of view of the reader, it is as if Alexander has been marching through Asia while the other story proceeded, so it was now time for him to draw near to the region upon which Josephus’s story focuses.
2. At *Jewish Antiquities* 20.182, Josephus reports that Festus was sent from Rome to replace Felix, and then he offers a few paragraphs about a Jewish delegation to Nero, so when Festus is said to have arrived in Judea, in 20.185, readers are expecting him.
3. Similarly, at 20.215, Josephus reports that Albinus heard that Florus was on his way to replace him—but another 35 paragraphs go by, including the entire history of the high priesthood, before Florus arrives (20.252).

A fourth way Josephus strives to maintain continuity in his narrative, especially when digressing from a main narrative (often built upon one long source) in order to introduce a secondary story (often drawn from another source), is by providing, at the outset of the new narrative, a short summary of it; only thereafter does he tell the details of the new story, gliding into them via something like “and this is the way that happened.” Typically, moreover,

when the new story is completed Josephus notes that it is over and then returns—at times noting the fact explicitly—to his main narrative (Williamson 1977, 50–55; Schwartz 1992, 271 n. 76). This procedure reassures readers that Josephus has a main story and that digressions are no more than that. Some examples of this are: *Jewish Antiquities* 10.18–19 (where the inserted story is explicitly ascribed to Herodotus [2.141]); 12.11 (where the whole long story this introduces is based upon the *Letter of Aristaeas*), 17.165–166 (where the inserted story has a rabbinic parallel at y. Yoma 1:1, 38c–d//b. Yoma 12b–13a), 18.91–95 (apparently based upon a priestly source: Schwartz 1992, 202–217), 18.310 (which introduces a long story about the Jews of Parthia, apparently based upon a Mesopotamian source—see Herman 2006).

A fifth way Josephus strove to maintain continuity was by getting rid of loose ends, most frequently by reporting the death of characters concerning whom he had no more to report. To understand this procedure we need only realize that a collection of excerpts gives snapshots concerning individuals at this or that point in their lives, but once readers hear about such interesting characters they might well want or expect to hear more about them; if Josephus had no more to tell about them, the least he could do was inform his readers that the individual had died, thus allowing them comfortably to put the character out of their minds. Thus, for example, note that although the Bible does not report the death of Rebecca, Josephus, in preparing his rendition of the report in Genesis 35:27 concerning Isaac’s death, snuck in the notice that Rebecca was no longer alive by that time (*Ant.* 1.345). Readers who would otherwise have been left hanging about the doings of that resourceful woman (see 1.269, 1.278) are thereby informed that there is no more to expect from her. Similarly, when at 11.325 Josephus suddenly announces that Sanballat had died, it seems likely that Josephus killed him so as to account for the fact that the Samaritan satrap, who had been so active in the story until this point, was not mentioned further in the sources Josephus had at his disposal (so Tcherikover 1959, 44). This Josephan practice often has the result that the deaths of several people are reported in the same passage. This need not mean they really died at the same time. Rather, it may only indicate that Josephus is exploiting a transition in his narrative to bring his readers up to date concerning various characters who have completed their roles. So, for example, at *Jewish Antiquities* 5.117–119, Joshua’s death is followed “at the same time” by that of Eleazar the high priest; at 11.158, Ezra dies and so too (“about the same time”) the high priest Joakeimos; at 11.346–347 Alexander dies and so does the high priest Jaddus; and at 20.103–104 (quoted above, [Section 2.4](#), point 5) high priests and governors are switched at the same time that a Herodian ruler dies.

2.6 Josephus Creates Continuity by Arranging His Materials

The editorial moves described in [Section 2.5](#) all leave the materials in their chronological order (as Josephus understood it) and only used words, one way or another, to create a feeling of continuity between them. Josephus could, however, go beyond that and organize his materials in such a way that one episode relates to the preceding one not only chronologically, or perhaps not chronologically at all, but, rather, in some meaningful way. Here are five examples:

1. The abovementioned story about the Benjaminites, at *Jewish Antiquities* 5.136–174, is based upon Judges 19–21, the last chapters of that book. Josephus, however, moved it up to a much earlier context, placing it between his version of a story in Judges 2 and his version of other stories taken, in order, from Judges 3 and 4; they begin at 5.179. There seem to be two reasons for this move. First, since the high priest at the time of the story was Phineas, son of Eleazar (Judges 20:27//*Ant.* 5.159), and Eleazar had died, and was replaced by Phineas, by the end of the Book of Joshua (24:33//*Ant.* 5.119), it follows that an event in the days of Phineas must have occurred early in the period described in the next book, Judges (Gera 2011, 128–129). Second, note that Judges 2 culminates with a long section that makes the basic programmatic historiographical statement of the book: that the Israelites repeatedly sinned and thus brought suffering upon themselves. In Judges, that suffering was imposed upon the Israelites by other nations, but Josephus, in his rendition of this in *Jewish Antiquities* 5.133–135, turns it into a prediction of the worst catastrophe he could imagine, which, as in the Korah story (see [Section 2.5](#)) and elsewhere (*Ant.* 5.231, 14.77 and 18.8–9), was fratricidal war. It was to illustrate *that* that he recounted the story of the war between the Benjaminites and the other tribes. Then he could turn back to the rest of the Book of Judges, which deals with clashes between the Israelites and other peoples.
2. The first two chapters of 1 Maccabees create a stark contrast between the martyrs described at the end of [Chapter 1](#), who just suffer and die, and the Hasmoneans introduced at the beginning of [Chapter 2](#), who instead do something practical and effective: they rebel, bravely and successfully. The contrast amounts to scorn for the martyrs and a presentation of them as pathetic figures who personify the problem and are not part of the solution, and thus serve as foils for the Hasmoneans introduced right after them. Such an attitude denigrating martyrs may well be understood in a book by the house historian of a dynasty that had successfully rebelled and created a sovereign Jewish state. For the Jews of the Diaspora, however, martyrs were heroes, as is shown so

well by 1 Maccabees' opposite account from the Diaspora: 2 Maccabees (van Henten 1997; Schwartz 2009). But by the time Josephus wrote *Jewish Antiquities*, he had been a diasporan Jew for more than two decades, a fact that is very obvious in his rewriting of 1 Maccabees, where Josephus emphasizes the Hasmoneans' willingness to die for the law, in passages in which 1 Maccabees emphasized their willingness to fight (Gafni 1989). Indeed, elsewhere as well Josephus parades Jewish martyrs as courageous heroes (see below, [Section 2.8](#), point 6). So, to return to our issue, the move from the martyrs at the end of 1 Maccabees 1 to the rebels at the outset of 1 Maccabees 2, a move which denigrates the martyrs, could not have been acceptable to Josephus. He solved the problem very elegantly, by inserting between the two episodes his account of the despicable Samaritans, who claimed that they were not Jewish and, therefore, that Antiochus's decrees should not apply to them. In this long section (*Ant.* 12.257–264), as elsewhere in his *Jewish Antiquities* (9.290–291; 11.341), Josephus portrays the Samaritans as spineless chameleons who claim to be Jewish when it is advantageous and deny it when it is liability. By inserting the Samaritans as contemptible foils between Jewish martyrs and Jewish rebels, Josephus neatly allowed both of the latter to shine in comparison.

3. In *Jewish Antiquities* 18, Josephus juxtaposes two stories about clashes between the Jews and Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. The stories are built as a matched diptych: in the first the Jews have legitimate religious grounds for their complaint and display noble willingness to die and so Pilate respects them, whereas in the second the Jews have no good reason to complain and behave despicably and so Pilate punishes them as they deserve. Whether or not they happened one after the other, by reporting the two episodes back-to-back, Josephus offers us a complete statement about how Judeans and Romans can get along with each other. The whole is more than the sum of its two parts.
4. A little later Josephus recounts, at great length and in detail (*Ant.* 18.65–80), the very scandalous behavior of the priests of Isis in Rome that resulted in their expulsion from the city. Then Josephus tells, in 18.81–84, the story of the crime of some Jewish villains, which led to the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, something that he characterizes as a disproportionate response (“And so they [*all* the Jews of Rome] were expelled from the city due to the wickedness of [*only*] four men”). Indeed, we know from Tacitus too (*Annals* 2.85) that the events occurred at the same time, in 19 C.E. But Josephus does not want us to read them only as adjacent chronologically. Rather, as he explicitly puts it when introducing the first one (*Ant.* 18.65), he first reports “the

insolence” of the priests of Isis, that is, something that they wrongly did, and only thereafter reports what “happened to” the Jews. That is, Josephus wants to put the second episode into proportion: he wants his readers to recognize the similarity between the two stories and to recognize, by comparing them, just how much worse the priests of Isis (who were representative of their community, and whose action culminated in the sexual exploitation of a Roman matron) were than the Jews (who were non-representative scoundrels, and whose crime amounted only to a financial swindle, and the whole Jewish community suffered as a result).

5. Although the death of Gaius Caligula is reported already in the midst of *Jewish Antiquities* (18.306–307), at the outset of the next book Josephus reverts to the topic and relates, at great length, the story of the conspiracy that eventually brought about his assassination. As Josephus tells the story, at the very beginning of Book 19, the root of the problem was Gaius’s insistence that he be recognized as a god. When, therefore, readers of Book 19 come to its final pages and discover that, whatever the positive qualities of the Jewish king, Agrippa I, his death ensued because he was received as a god, they must realize that Josephus has unified this book with a common theme.

2.7 Explicit Authorial Passages

Not infrequently Josephus explicitly makes his own presence known to his readers—and passages such as these contribute substantially, of course, to the reader’s impression that *Jewish Antiquities* is, indeed, a composition written by an author. There are three basic types of such passages.

The simple type of such authorial passages includes references to other discussions, cross-references that Josephus uses to refer readers to earlier or later discussions of his own, or to discussions by others. These are very numerous (for a categorized list of some two hundred, see Drüner 1896, 82–94), and they constantly remind the reader that a single self-conscious hand lies behind the work he or she is reading.

Often the references to other works come along with some explicit discussion by Josephus that explains that he himself will refrain from discussing some topic, or from pursuing it further than he did. Those topics usually pertain to non-Jewish history, which has somehow touched upon Josephus’s work but which, nevertheless, lies beyond its purview, the history of the Jews. For some examples, see *Jewish Antiquities* 11.305 (history of Alexander), 12.390, 13.253 (issues of Seleucid history), 14.98, 14.122; 18.54; 20.154–157 (Roman history). Such explicit highlighting of his own mandate reassures readers that

it is, indeed, a composition with its own identity and integrity.

A third type of authorial passage is more varied. These are passages that offer authorial reflections on the events narrated and/or explain the author's considerations about what to tell and how to present his story. Whether as an introduction to a section, or as comments after it, short or long (when substantial, we would term them "excursuses"), Josephus frequently tells his readers, using the first person, his thoughts about the meaning or implications of the events he records. Often, indeed, he presents his comments as an explanation as to why he considered it necessary to include the report, thus inviting readers, as it were, into his study, and making it all the clearer to them that a thinking and active individual produced the book they are reading. Some examples include:

1. When beginning a long section of his work, Josephus often attaches an introduction that sets out its lesson. Thus, for example, at *Jewish Antiquities* 2.7–8, Josephus expatiates about the way his story about Jacob's progeny demonstrates God's providence, just as a similar passage introduces Josephus's account of Agrippa I at 18.127–129; and at 4.11–13 Josephus gives a substantial summary of the long Korah story, to which he explicitly turns at the end of 4.13. Sometimes, in contrast, such introductions are much shorter; thus, for example, at 13.300, Josephus announces that the coming story of John Hyrcanus's descendants will show their downfall (*katastrophē*) and how far they were from their father's good fortune, just as at 17.60 he introduces the story of Antipater's downfall as an example for humanity, that one should always conduct oneself virtuously.
2. At *Jewish Antiquities* 6.339, Josephus concludes his report, based upon 1 Samuel 28, of Saul's meeting with the witch of Endor, who, after prophesying that Saul and his sons would fall in battle the next day, proceeded to give him a proper meal. Josephus follows this with two excursuses (6.340–342, 343–350), one about the witch as an example of kindness and one about Saul, who refused to flee the field of battle, as an example of nobility and dignity. At the end of the second excursus Josephus, speaking of himself in the first person, announces that he will return to that from which he had digressed. Readers are thus reminded that they are reading a book by an active and self-conscious author who wants to make certain points.
3. Again, after describing Solomon's wisdom, which included his knowledge about incantations that counteract demons and relieve diseases (*Ant.* 8.45), Josephus jumps down to his own day and testifies in 8.46 that he himself could report, from his own experience, about a certain Eleazar who, using Solomon's recipes, successfully performed exorcisms in the presence of Vespasian and others. After that report, which Josephus gives in some detail, in 8.49 he reverts to his main

narrative only after explaining, referring to himself in the first person, that he had thought it “necessary” to offer that other story because it testifies to the greatness of Solomon and his closeness to God. Anyone reading this section is very aware that this is something produced by an author who has a mind of his own and is not merely a compiler enslaved by one source after another.

4. A few sections later, after citing a correspondence between Solomon and Hiram of Tyre *in extenso* at 8.51–54, Josephus pauses to explain, in 8.55–56, that he cited the texts in full so as to create an opportunity to demonstrate his own credibility: he challenges his readers either to accept his claims or to check them with the Tyrian archivists. Any reader who might have suspected that the letter was cited in full only because the book was produced by juxtaposing one snippet to the next is thereby put on notice that the book has an author who has a personality and agenda of his own.
5. In *Jewish Antiquities* 12, after Josephus gives a long paraphrase of the *Letter of Aristeeas*, which is about the translation of the Torah into Greek, Josephus deliberately summarizes it in 12.118 as a story about how Ptolemy Philadelphus honored the Jews. Formulating the point of the *Letter* that way allows Josephus to segue immediately into an excursus (12.119–128) that documents governmental respect for Jews in various states and over several centuries, down to Josephus’s own days, and, when it is completed, Josephus announces (12.128), using the first person, that he will now return to the narrative from which he had digressed. As in the preceding case, so too here readers will be very aware that they are reading something produced by an active and self-conscious author, not merely a hodgepodge of sources.
6. The same may also be said for the collections of Roman and other documents that Josephus presents at *Jewish Antiquities* 14.186–267 and 16.162–178, especially since Josephus prefaces the former with, and appends to the latter, first-person explanations about what the documents indicate and why he thought it necessary to cite them. In the latter case, moreover, Josephus concludes the section with a first-person statement about now returning to his narrative.

2.8 Thematic Unity: Goals and Values

If the points discussed above all address the tactics Josephus used to turn his excerpts and paraphrases from disparate sources into a single composition, and to ensure the readers’ impression that the work is indeed a unified

composition and not merely a concatenation of chronologically arranged snippets, now we will turn to some recurrent themes and values that characterize the work and contribute in a more overarching, or deeper, way to making it read as the work of an author, rather than one of a mere compiler.

In the work's Introduction, Josephus states what he views as the main theme of his work:

Speaking generally, the main lesson to be learnt from this history by any who care to peruse it is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity; whereas, in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things (else) practicable become impracticable, and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters.

(*Ant.* 1.14; trans. Thackeray, LCL)

Indeed, this theme, which comes along with the theme of divine providence as supervising history, is ubiquitous in the *Jewish Antiquities*, as especially Harold Attridge has emphasized (Attridge 1976). Time and again Josephus underlines the workings of divine providence, whether by a few words in his narrative or in didactic asides addressed explicitly to his readers. Note, for example, his introductions to the stories of Joseph and of Agrippa (*Ant.* 2.7–8; 18.127–142); the emphasis at 5.337 that the story of Ruth's progeny illustrates how God can make plain people rise to great power, paralleled by the emphasis at 8.314 that God destroyed the wicked kings of Israel but made the pious and righteous kings of Judea flourish; the comment he makes at 18.127–128 about how their lack of piety made the descendants of Herod all but disappear within a century of his death; the way the death of the wicked Gaius, which forestalled that of the righteous Petronius, is explicitly mobilized as proof of God's providence (*Ant.* 18.309); and the way the conversion of the royal house of Adiabene, though expected to bring catastrophe upon the kingdom, instead guaranteed it God's providential protection (*Ant.* 20.49, 91). Examples could be multiplied at will; suffice it to say not only that he inserts God's providence into the narrative at several points in which the parallels in his earlier work, *Jewish War*, did not mention it (contrast *War* 1.287, 340–341, 656 and 2.183, to *Ant.* 14.390–391, 462, 17.168, and 18.255, respectively), but also that the very last lines of the first half of *Jewish Antiquities* (10.277–281) are an explicit authorial polemic, precisely at the center of the entire work, against those who do not believe in divine providence and instead hold that God takes no interest in human affairs.

Another major theme of the *Jewish Antiquities* is the emphasis that the Jews are a respectable people. This is already indicated both by the imitation of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's work about the Romans and by the very

decision to offer readers such a long work about the Jews, as also by the book's claim that they are ancient and have a continuous history; as Josephus indicates at the outset of *Against Apion* (also known as "On the Antiquity of the Jews"), the claim to antiquity meant a claim to respectability (see Pilhofer 1990). Again, in *Against Apion* (2.136), Josephus states that, in general, his *Jewish Antiquities* had amply demonstrated that there had been many "worthy" people among the Jews throughout history. But beyond that Josephus strove to portray the Jews as respectable people in a number of specific ways:

1. Josephus often omits elements in his sources that might redound to the discredit of the Jews (Feldman 1998, 37–38). This we can see especially in the biblical part of his work, where we can read his main source and see what he has omitted, despite his promise (1.17; 2.347; 4.196; 10.218) to obey the biblical requirement that nothing be added to the Bible or omitted from it. Sometimes it is especially incriminating details that Josephus skips, such as Jacob's outright lie about his identity (Gen. 27:24; cf. *Ant.* 1.270–271) or the patriarch's treacherous promise to the Shechemites that if they were circumcised, they would all become one nation (Gen. 34:13–17; cf. *Ant.* 1.338–340). Indeed, Josephus's version of the latter story ignores the topic of circumcision, though it is central to the biblical source. That issue was sensitive enough; linking it with Jewish perfidy would have been too much to handle. Similarly, note that three times (*Ant.* 6.197, 201; 7.25) Josephus changes the foreskins of a hundred Philistines, which Saul demanded of David as the price for his daughter's hand in marriage (1 Sam. 18:25; 2 Sam. 3:14), into the heads of six hundred Philistines; while the reason for the change of number is obscure, the move away from foreskins presumably bespeaks the same sensitivity as that concerning the Shechemites. Another hot potato Josephus sidestepped comes at *Jewish Antiquities* 10.138, where, though he does report that Jehu's troops burnt down the temple of Baal in Samaria, he uses a positive-sounding verb to round out the story ("thereby purifying Samaria from foreign practices") and ignores his source's report that they turned the temple into a latrine (2 Kings 10:27). In other cases Josephus omits entire stories which he thought were too embarrassing, such as those of those of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), the Golden Calf (Exod. 32), and Micah's idol (Judges 17–18).
2. In his portrayal of Jewish heroes, Josephus often ascribes to them the virtues Greeks associated with their heroes. Thus, for example, he reports that Jacob was envied by all, due to the virtues of his children, "for they were not inferior at all to anyone, but they were courageous with respect to the labors of their hands and the endurance of toils and clever in understanding" (*Ant.* 2.7, trans. Feldman 2001, BJP); Moses

“spoke and dealt with masses, pleasing them both in other respects and as master (*autokratôr*) of his emotions ... If as a general he was in élite company, as a prophet he had no peer” (*Ant.* 4.328–329; trans. Feldman 2001, BJP); Joshua was

a man not wanting either in intelligence or in skill to expound his ideas to the multitude with lucidity, nay in both respects supreme, in actions and perils he was stout-hearted and greatly daring, in peacetime a most dexterous director of affairs, adapting himself admirably to every occasion.

(*Ant.* 5.118; trans. Thackeray and Marcus, LCL)

3. Saul, who bravely persisted in battle although he knew he was doomed, is more admirable than other generals who fought in the hope of victory (*Ant.* 6.343–350); Judas Maccabaeus “had been a valiant man and a great warrior, and ... had had the fortitude to do and suffer all things for the liberty of his fellow-citizens” (*Ant.* 12.433; trans. Marcus, LCL).
4. In describing the Jews as respectable (and also in making his own work a respectable Greek book), one of the most challenging desiderata Josephus faced in the first half of his *Jewish Antiquities*, in turning biblical stories into respectable Greek literature (see [Chapter 6](#) by Almagor in this volume), was the need to describe the thoughts and feelings of the historical characters he described. Typically, biblical history focused on what people did, leaving it up to the readers to infer, if they want, what thoughts or emotions lay behind the actions or accompanied them. Greek readers, in contrast, expected characters to have thoughts and emotions and authors to be explicit about such things (Auerbach 1953). Josephus met their expectations. Thus, for some examples:
 - a. Genesis 14:14 reports that when Abraham heard that his nephew, Lot, had been captured, along with other Sodomites, he immediately set out in pursuit of his captors, but Josephus insists on making that move only the result of considerations and feelings: “Abraham, hearing of their disaster, was moved alike with fear for his kinsman Lot and with compassion for his friends and neighbours, the Sodomites” (*Ant.* 1.176; trans. Thackeray, LCL);
 - b. Genesis 22 makes no explicit attempt to reflect Abraham’s opinion or feeling about God’s command that he sacrifice his son, Isaac, neither when the command is given nor when he was about to fulfill it, but Josephus adds a summary of Abraham’s considerations upon receipt of the command (*Ant.* 1.225) and also a speech prior to his move to fulfill it (1.228–231), followed

by an appropriate response by Isaac, too (1.232).

- c. Exodus 2:1–3 gives no reason why Moses's mother put him into the bulrushes, but Josephus, who attributes the initiative to Moses's father, explains that he did so "fearing that he would be detected and, incurring the king's wrath, would perish himself along with the young child and thus bring God's promise to nought" (*Ant.* 2.219; trans. Thackeray, LCL).
 - d. 2 Samuel 7:1 and 1 Chronicles 17:1 say that David wanted to build a temple because of the contrast he noticed between his own palace and the mere tabernacle (tent) allotted to Ark of the Law, but Josephus explains that David "thought he would be guilty of sin" if he did not build a temple (*Ant.* 7.90).
 - e. 2 Samuel 12:1–4 reports that Nathan addressed David with a parable, but Josephus felt it necessary to explain the consideration that led him to take such an indirect approach (*Ant.* 7.147).
 - f. 2 Kings 12:4–5 reports that King Jehoash ordered the priests to collect money to repair the temple, but v. 6 says that by the king's twenty-third year nothing had been done, leaving us to infer that the priests had, for some reason, ignored the king's order. Josephus felt the need to explain that the high priest did not solicit contributions "for he realized that no one would be well-disposed enough to offer the money" (*Ant.* 9.162).
5. Apart from striving, in the ways illustrated in the last few points, to show that the Jews are respectable, Josephus also argues, in another major theme of his work, that they are benevolently disposed toward their fellow men. Both in implicit polemics against those who would characterize the Jews as "misanthropic" (such as those with whom he argues explicitly in *Against Apion*), and in comments here and there in his narratives, such as the one cited above about Abraham's concern for the Sodomites at 1.176 (where Gen. 14:14, in contrast, has Abraham worried about his nephew alone), or in the explicit excursus at *Jewish Antiquities* 16.174–178, in which Josephus emphasizes that Jewish laws and practices answer to the same standards of natural justice as do those of all of mankind, Josephus emphasizes time and again that it is indeed *philanthrôpia* that characterizes the Jews (Feldman 1998, 239–246; Berthelot 2003, 349–383).
6. In portraying the Jews as respectable, Josephus especially likes to underline their willingness to suffer, and even to die, rather than violate Jewish law; see, for example, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.63, 65, 67; 17.152; 18.59, 266–272; 20.116 (and Gafni 1989, 121–125), just as, in general, a major theme of *Jewish Antiquities* is the role of Jewish law as the

centerpiece of Jewish religion (Schröder 1996, 70–130). This theme, repeated emphatically, somewhat later, as the peroration of his presentation of the law in *Against Apion* (1.42; 2.217–219), certainly served the apologetic purpose of indicating to the Romans that, at a practical level, if they wanted the Jews to live peaceably as their subjects, they should allow them to observe the laws of their religion. But given the Romans' pride in their own devotion to their laws, this theme may also have been calculated to elicit Roman respect for the Jews as their peers as well (Goodman 1994, 335; Haaland 2006, 47–53).

7. Another aspect of the latter emphasis on the Jews' devotion to their law is Josephus's recurrent attention to the constitutional history of the Jews. Time and again, in moving from one historical period to another, he notes that the "constitution" changed from "monarchy" to "aristocracy" or "democracy"; thus, for some examples, see *Jewish Antiquities* 4.223; 6.36, 83–85; 11.111–112; 14.91, also the score-keeping at 20.229, 234, 251 (Schwartz 1983/84; Feldman 1998, 144–145). Similarly, Josephus devotes explicit attention to when the Jews had "freedom" and when and how they lost it; indeed, as Feldman put it, especially with regard to the first decade of *Jewish Antiquities*, "one might almost say that liberty is the leitmotif of the history of the Jewish people as Josephus sees it" (Feldman 1998, 148). All this usage of political science terminology assures readers that the Jews are respectable members of the civilized world, whose institutions are comparable to those of the measure of all respectability: Rome.
8. Complementing his emphasis on the Jews' devotion to their own law, Josephus also emphasizes that they are peaceful and law-abiding subjects of their temporal rulers, a point certified by the fact that so many of the latter indeed bestowed upon them privileges and protection. This claim, which basically amounts to asserting a Jewish acceptance of a division between religion and state (namely, as long as the state allows the Jews their religion, the Jews will accept the demand of the state to rule them), is, of course, written especially large in the second half of *Jewish Antiquities*, which deals with the Second Temple period, during which the Jews, as a rule, had no sovereignty of their own. Here, be it in the list of royal privileges in *Jewish Antiquities* 12.119–128, the collections of Roman and other privileges in 14.186–267 and 16.162–178, or in the way he angrily condemns rebels against Rome in *Jewish Antiquities* 18–20, Josephus asserts repeatedly that good Jews are good subjects of their temporal rulers and, in return, are respected by the latter and allowed by them to observe the laws and practices of Judaism. If their right to observe the latter is threatened, they are ready to die for them, but not, of course, to go to war for them,

as the Jews nobly respond to Petronius's challenge, "Would you, then, go to war against Caesar?!": "In no way will we fight, but we will die before we violate the laws" (*Ant.* 18.271).

It may be noted, however, that while sometimes Josephus's devotion to this theme made him creative, such as in the way he shifted emphases in the story and speeches of 1 Maccabees, sometimes he was at a loss. Sometimes there was such a chasm between the event as it happened (so far as he knew) and the values he wanted to present that—if he did not go so far as simply to omit the story, or totally to rewrite it—all he could do was leave out the bothersome elements, thus leaving readers an incomplete story. These cases are, therefore, particularly eloquent witnesses to Josephus's quandary between his commitment to being a truthful historian (as he so often proclaims), on the one hand, and his commitment to present his people in the best possible light, on the other.

1. Thus, for example, at *Jewish Antiquities* 18.55, Josephus explains that Jews were upset about the iconic Roman military standards that Pontius Pilate brought into Jerusalem, but he does not tell us (as he did in *War* 2.170) that the problem was a violation of laws that pertain particularly to the city. Rather, he explains only that Jews are not allowed to make such things, a point that is irrelevant because no one asked them to make them. That is: in the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus, who was now used to the rules of the game of life in the Diaspora, steered so far away from the notion of a Jewish Holy Land or Holy City that he preferred to tell this story, about people who acted on those notions, in a way that misrepresented their claim and ascribed them an irrelevant argument.
2. Similarly, at *Jewish Antiquities* 18.264, the Jews complain to Petronius, whom Gaius had ordered to erect a Roman statue in the temple of Jerusalem, that they are not allowed to make statues. That is just as irrelevant as the argument at 18.55; contrast *Jewish War* 2.195, where the Jews' argument was that statues are not allowed anywhere in the Holy Land, not only in the temple. Here again, that territorial notion of Judaism was not one Josephus was now maintaining, and if that hampered his ability to describe clearly what happened once in Judea, where that notion was well at home, so be it.

In sum: the twenty books of the *Jewish Antiquities* offer a history of the Jews from the earliest times until 66 C.E. Josephus built the work by organizing, in chronological order, extracts from various sources, many of which can be identified or at least characterized. Although not always successful, he put a great deal of effort, in numerous ways, into allowing his readers to glide easily from one section of his work to the next, despite the fact that often they changed topics and point of view. Moreover, he also devoted a good bit of effort into preaching some recurrent themes which presented the Jews and Judaism in the best light possible in a Roman context. Although the first half

of the work adds little to our knowledge of the history of the biblical period, which it narrates, the second half of the work remains the basic source for any history of the Second Temple period. Moreover, both halves of the work supply us with a rich picture of Josephus's interests and values, which we can contextualize in the Roman and Jewish worlds of the late first century, in which he wrote. Historians, source critics, and composition critics can all find in *Jewish Antiquities* fertile fields to plow.

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CHAPTER 3

Josephus's *Autobiography* (*Life of Josephus*)

Steve Mason

3.1 Introduction

As the briefest of Josephus's writings the *Life* has attracted more holistic study than his other works. Because of its content, it has also been given the introductory position in modern translations. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as we remember that it was composed after the *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities*, and not with the purpose of providing merely factual information. The little work has much to teach us about the author's values, assumptions, style, literary interests, and historiography. One of the hardest things to find in it is the life of Josephus.

In this chapter I hope to show why that is so. I aim to assist new readers of the work by contextualizing it historically and considering its purposes, contents, structures, and themes. At the end I shall ask about its historical utility, comparing it for that purpose with parallel material in Book 2 of the *Judean War*.

3.2 Date and Occasion

Any interpretation needs to reckon with the context in which the *Life* appeared. A seemingly safe starting point is the observation that Josephus wrote it as an appendix to his major history, the *Judean Antiquities*. In self-congratulatory remarks at the end of the *magnum opus* he writes (20.262–268):

262 Encouraged by the completion of what I had projected, I would now say plainly that no other person who had wished to do so, whether a Judean or a foreigner, would have been able to produce this work in such a precise way for Greek speakers. 263 For among my compatriots I am admitted to have an education in our country's customs that far surpasses theirs, *and* I worked very hard to share in the learning of Greek letters and poetry ... 266 Perhaps it will not be a provocation to jealousy, or strike ordinary folk as gauche, if I review briefly both my own ancestry (*genos*) and the events

of my life while there are still those living who can either challenge or corroborate. 267 With these matters I shall conclude the *Judean Antiquities* (*Epi toutois de katapausô tèn archaiologian*), comprising twenty volumes and 60,000 lines, and should the Deity permit I shall again make mention cursorily (*kata peridromên hypomnêsô palin*) of both the war and what has happened to us [= me?] until the present day, which belongs to the thirteenth year of the rule of Domitian Caesar and my own fifty-sixth year since birth. 268 I have also resolved to write in four volumes about our Judean views concerning God ...

After this introduction, the *Life* begins without an introduction of its own, and with a celebration of Josephus's ancestry (1–6).

Just as the *Judean Antiquities* looks ahead immediately to the *Life*, Josephus concludes the autobiography by addressing the history's dedicatee (cf. *Ant.* 1.8–9): "Having repaid you, Epaphroditus, most excellent of men, with the entire record of the *Antiquities* up to the present, I conclude the narrative here" (*entautha katapauô ton logon*, 430). The shift from the future tense ("I shall conclude") in *Judean Antiquities* 20 to the present of the same verb at the end of the *Life* ("I here conclude") shows the expectation realized (cf. Barish 1978, 66–71). Incidentally, it confounds rigid genre distinctions.

Josephus's aim to conclude his great history with his *Life* is reflected in the citation and manuscript traditions. Eusebius, who knew his works intimately, does not mention a separate *Life* in his summary of Josephus's corpus (*Hist. eccl.* 3.9.3–4), but quotes a passage from *Life* 361ff. as from "the end of the *Antiquities*" (*Hist. eccl.* 3.10.8). All the manuscripts of *Judean Antiquities* include *Life* with Books 11–20, A and W noting that *Life* 430 marks the "end of Josephus's *Antiquities*."

Further, scholars have observed a continuum of style and diction from *Judean Antiquities* 20 to the *Life*. Abandoning the awkward experiments of Books 17–19, both adopt a simpler, relaxed style, which may reflect Josephus's natural voice. In addition to the examples offered by Thackeray (1929, 18–19), consider phrases such as "the children of Asamonaeus" (*Life* 2; *Ant.* 20.190, 347), "minor and incidental charge" (*Life* 13; *Ant.* 20.215), "run the risk that his action would come to trial" (*Life* 90; *Ant.* 20.47), "instigators of sedition" (*Life* 170, 340; *Ant.* 20.4, 127, 174), and "fraternize" (*Life* 242; *Ant.* 20.164–165).

Further still, the *Life* assumes its audience's knowledge of matters recently discussed in *Judean Antiquities* 20: the emperor Nero and his wife Poppaea (*Life* 16; *Ant.* 20.195), the Roman governor Felix (*Life* 13; *Ant.* 20.173–178), Agrippa II and his sister Berenice (*Life* 48; *Ant.* 20.145–146), and the special status of Tiberias and other territories that now belong to the king (*Life* 38; *Ant.* 20.159).

If we had only this evidence, we would conclude that the *Life* appeared as a

companion to the *Judean Antiquities* (93/94 C.E.), at some time before Domitian's assassination on September 18, 96 C.E. Domitian is the last emperor whom Josephus honours for his benefactions (*Life* 429), and it seems unthinkable either that the ruling emperor could have been ignored or that Josephus would have continued praising Domitian after his death, when his memory was being avidly expunged (Pliny, *Paneg.* 52.4–5; Suetonius, *Dom.* 22). In *Judean Antiquities* 20.267 Josephus said that he was writing in Domitian's thirteenth year, and *Life*'s ending makes the best sense if it was written shortly thereafter. The unstudied style, with formulaic phrases and simple sentences (Mason 2001, li–liii), and the evident lack of meticulous research all suggest that Josephus *could* have added this appendix quickly.

The fly in the ointment is his criticism (*Life* 359) of a rival historian, Justus of Tiberias (below), for not making his account public while King Agrippa II was alive. This notice that the king is dead raises two problems: When did he die? And, depending on the answer: How can the *Life* be related to the *Judean Antiquities*? These two issues have complicated the appealing picture of an autobiography appended to the *Judean Antiquities*, though after a review of the complications I shall support that simpler picture.

The learned ninth-century Patriarch Photius claims in his book note on Justus's lost *Chronicle of the Judean Kings* (*Bibl.* 33), which he mainly criticizes for ignoring Christianity, that the work extended from Moses to the death of Agrippa—in the third year of Trajan (i.e., from January 28, 100 C.E.). Many scholars of the past century or so have dismissed this as an error, without great worry given that Photius was writing eight centuries after the events (e.g., Luther 1910, 55–58; Frankfort 1961; Rajak 1973, 361; Schürer and Vermes 1973, 1.481–483; Cohen 1979, 170–180; Smallwood 1981, 572–574; Siegert et al. 2001, 1; Kushnir-Stein 2002; Jones 2002). They have pointed to the absence of coins from what would have been the last five years or more of Agrippa's reign, and to inscriptional evidence from Auranitis (a large swathe of Agrippa's kingdom) that it was under direct Roman rule by 96/97 C.E. The last inscription undeniably from Agrippa's reign dates to 92/93 (Schürer and Vermes 1973, 482 n. 47), possibly 85/86, while the latest coins are arguably from 88/89, though possibly 94/95 (Jones 2002, 115–116; Kushnir-Stein 2002, 127).

Some scholars further observe that the later volumes of *Judean Antiquities*, no later than 93/94, appear to assume Agrippa's passing before then (Luther 1910, 55–58). Josephus details the youthful indiscretions of Agrippa I, the king's father (18.145–154), and does not shrink from mentioning rumors of the bachelor Agrippa II's incestuous relations with his sister, his sacrilegious activities in Jerusalem, and his reputed preference for foreigners (20.143–146, 189–196, 211–218). *Judean Antiquities* 17.28 says that the Romans have succeeded Herodians as rulers of Batanaea, which together with Auranitis constituted the southern half of Agrippa II's territory. Finally, 18.128 declares

that “in less than a century” since Herod’s death (4 B.C.E.), “his descendants—and they were many—have perished, except for a few.” It is hard to imagine the point of such a reflection if Herod’s most illustrious descendant, friend to both powerful Romans and Josephus, were still alive.

As to how Photius could have been so mistaken, Schürer’s revisers cleverly suggested that he might have transposed information from a beloved source, Jerome’s *Lives of Illustrious Men*. Jerome has a tiny entry on Justus before a full paragraph on Clement of Rome (*Vir. ill.* 14–15), who died in “the third year of Trajan” (Schürer and Vermes 1973, 482 n. 47). Perhaps Photius ran the two entries together (though he did not copy either), or that date stuck in his mind and he misplaced it? The suggestion is valuable not because it is likely but because it reminds us how many unknown conditions could have generated errors in such a late account.

Other eminent scholars, however, have assumed or vigorously defended Photius’s date, a position that anchors their understanding of the *Life* (Ewald 1886, 8.74; original Schürer 1898–1901, 1.77, 87–88; Laqueur 1920, 1–6; Thackeray 1929, 16–19; Gelzer 1952, 67–90; Kokkinos 1998, 396–399). They do not find it easy to dismiss Photius, who gives the impression of having taken Agrippa’s death-date, which would have been important for a book on all the Judean kings, directly from Justus. They find support in coins and inscriptions that *might*, depending on how one interprets them, show Agrippa active as late as 95. These would invalidate a death-date of 92/93, though they would still leave an evidentiary vacuum for Agrippa’s final years (assuming Photius). Even to begin weighing the relevant issues here would divert us irresponsibly, but they involve the king’s back-dating of his ruling era to two or three starting points, the exact identification of those points (49, 54–56, 60–61 C.E.? See Kushnir-Stein 2002; Kokkinos 2003) and his chronological consistency.

Here it must suffice to say that Agrippa’s friend and contemporary Josephus knew the king to be dead when he wrote the *Life* (359), though it seems that Domitian still reigned (429). Passages in *Judean Antiquities* 17–20 also suggest the king’s demise. Coin dates that *might* leave Agrippa breathing until 95 might still offer just enough time for Justus to bring out his already written work and for Josephus to read and mention it before Domitian meets his end, but the timing would be close. At any rate, the material evidence cannot count as confirmation of Photius’s date, nor of the earlier date (e.g., showing Agrippa to have left major parts of his kingdom by 96). If the material evidence required us to find the king alive until 95, it would create a third option, between 92 and 100. But since experts have understood it to be compatible with Agrippa’s departure by 92/93 (Jones 2002; Kushnir-Stein 2002) and we cannot be sure how Photius came up with his information, most scholars see no reason to keep Agrippa alive past 93.

I discuss the issue chiefly because acceptance of Photius has produced some

of the most sophisticated research on the *Life*. If Agrippa died in 100, our present *Life* was written after that, in spite of its apparent connections with Domitian. But if it appeared so late, how should we explain its clear links with the *Judean Antiquities*? One proposal imagined two versions of the *Life*: an initially brief sketch of Josephus's career (*Life* 1–27, 414–430) accompanying the *Judean Antiquities* in 93/94, which he later expanded to include his Galilean career and refute Justus, after 100. Few historians have been convinced, however, by such a paltry original *Life* (cf. Barish 1978, 61–62). Would not such a greatly expanded, free-standing *Life* written for a new purpose after 100, have received its own Introduction like Josephus's other works? And why would the *Life* remain so closely bound to the *Judean Antiquities*?

The other logical option, widely accepted since the mid-nineteenth century as the seemingly necessary consequence of Photius's dating, was to posit two versions of the *Judean Antiquities*. The idea was that Josephus *planned* to cover his life on completion of the *Judean Antiquities*, and so wrote those anticipatory lines (above), but he was distracted by the more urgent need to produce the *Against Apion*. Losing the momentum for writing a *Life* for some years, he was finally goaded into fulfilling the unfulfilled promise of *Judean Antiquities* 20.266 by Justus's work, which attacked him "both as an historian and a man" (Ewald 1886, 8.71–74). The great Josephus-scholar Thackeray adjusted this picture by considering the *Life* an afterthought prompted by Justus's work after 100. Josephus had not contemplated it when he wrote the *Judean Antiquities*, but must have "inserted" its introductory lines in the new accompanying edition of *Judean Antiquities* (Thackeray 1905, 466). The notion that after 100 Josephus would rewrite the clear dating of his work to 93/94, to accommodate his new introduction of the *Life*, tells us much about learned opinion of our author's intelligence or attentiveness in that period. And the idea that Josephus would produce a new edition of the twenty-volume *Judean Antiquities* to accompany the wee (and unrelated) *Life* would seem the definition of "the tail wagging the dog."

Laqueur (1920) reworked these proposals into a comprehensive and durable reconstruction, involving revisions of each of Josephus's narratives. His crucial point was that Josephus must have written *Life*'s main content when it still mattered. That could not have been after 100, when Justus's history appeared—and Josephus was long since ensconced in Rome. Josephus must have written such a vigorous defence of his Galilean career, much more concerned with John of Gischala than Justus, while he was still there (1920, 121, 247–278). The Jerusalem leaders who had dispatched him to pacify Galilee had reason to suspect that he had become a rogue warlord in rivalry with John. After they dispatched the delegation to fetch him (*Life* 189–335), Laqueur proposed, he wrote an administrative report explaining his behaviour and insisting that he *had* pacified Galilee, in spite of John's harassment. This

report would later evolve into our *Life*. But first, after his surrender to the Romans, he was commissioned to write Flavian propaganda about the conflict. For that purpose he refashioned the report to portray his participation in the war as that of a dutiful general. By the early 90s, Josephus's Flavian boosters were gone and he turned to writing nationalistic apologetics, producing the *Judean Antiquities* in that vein—*sans* autobiography. Finally, after Agrippa's death (in 100) and Justus's production of a fine rival history, which was destroying his credibility and ruining the market for his work, he really had to defend himself. So he dusted off the original administrative report, throwing in new material to meet Justus's challenge, but creating the alleged hodge-podge we have today.

The lynchpin of Laqueur's analysis was his confidence that our present *Judean Antiquities* reveals the scars of post-Agrippan revision: the passages noted above and also a double conclusion. The one that now comes at the very end (*Ant.* 20.258, 267–268) must have been the original, since it counts the number of lines in the finished 20 volumes. The sentences that introduce the *Life* (20.259–266) must come from the post-100 edition—now bundled with the autobiography. Their presently awkward fusion must be due to confused copyists. Though broadly accepting Laqueur's outline, Thackeray (1929, 16–19) maintained his position that Josephus himself spliced the second ending into the first, neglecting to iron out the wrinkles.

Sensibilities change, and in 1978 Barish demonstrated to the satisfaction of most (now of a different generation) that *Judean Antiquities* 20.259–268 makes respectable sense as a paragraph written at one go, both concluding the history and introducing the *Life*. Still, Laqueur's importance for scholarship and influence on such giants as Thackeray, Gelzer (1952), and Cohen (1979 below) requires that those of us who wish to understand the *Life* think carefully about its literary unity.

The standard view, to which I formerly subscribed (Mason 1991, 316–324), finds whatever coherence our *Life* has in Josephus's effort to refute Justus of Tiberias's competing history, whether in 93/94 or after 100. We have just seen that having a reason to write would not necessarily entail, in the view of many scholars, crafting a coherent piece of literature suited to the purpose. Laqueur and Thackeray thought that, though responding to Justus, Josephus preserved all sorts of vestigial material (cf. Hölscher 1916). That view is hard to reconcile with the fairly clean lines of Josephus's other works, and it leaves one wondering how such a refutation of Justus could have had any chance of success. Most others have therefore considered the anti-Justus polemic more thoroughgoing, determining the shape of our narrative even where Justus is not clearly visible (recently Rodgers 2006). Where Josephus claims that he was tricked into supporting John's schemes, that he raped no women, or that he was generous to opponents, Justus must have claimed the opposite (Niese 1896, 227; Luther 1910; Drexler 1925, 293–312; Schalit 1933; Rajak 1973;

Mason 1991). Even still, the sections on Josephus's ancestry, youth, family life, and later career in Rome have seemed to almost everyone a merely conventional frame.

The main problems with the Justus explanation are that it does not explain the structure or content of the *Life*, including these opening and closing sections that seem so important to Josephus, and that it severs his own clear connection with the *Judean Antiquities*. The surrogate prologue (above) makes no mention of any such provocation, which would be surprising given Josephus's clear declarations of apologetic-polemical intent elsewhere (*War* 1.1–8; *Apion* 1.1–5). He claims to write the *Life* because he is extraordinarily pleased with himself after completing the *Judean Antiquities*, and imagines that his audiences want to know more about him. Since the Introduction makes his ancestry a crucial point (*Ant.* 20.266) and the *Life* immediately elaborates the issue (1–6), we cannot brush it aside as merely introductory to the engagement with Justus. Anyway, where is the engagement with Justus? He does not appear until *Life* 34, and then as the leader of one faction in Tiberias, beside his father. His book is mentioned incidentally (40), though Josephus keeps the focus on his behavior (41). He devotes a digression to Justus's book, it is true, but that comes near the end (336–367) as a clear digression or even afterthought: “Having come this far in my narrative, I want to go through some points against Justus, the very one who has written an *œuvre* concerning these things, and against the others [who have written bad history]” (336). And even the digression contains little or nothing that defends Josephus's *Judean War*.

The mismatches between *Life*'s content and any programmatic intention to rebut Justus have forced scholars to reconsider. Cohen (1979) is indispensable here. Cohen's aim was not to interpret the *Life* as such, but to explore the conflicts between it and the *Judean War* concerning Josephus's time in Galilee as a basis for getting at what really happened. To establish a control database, he examined the extensive parallels between *Judean War* 1–2 and *Judean Antiquities* 13–20, where he found Josephus's procedure to vary: sometimes he rewrote and embellished the earlier work; in other cases he must have gone back to *Judean War*'s sources. When it came to Josephus's career, Cohen found the version in *Judean War* 2 to be much more artful and thematically structured, the *Life* rather incoherent. This and the many conflicts between the two led him to conclude that Josephus could not have used the *Judean War* as a source. Unless he carelessly relied on faulty memories, he must have returned to some early notes, the source for *Judean War*'s version (Cohen 1979, 77). Thus far, Cohen stands in the Laqueurian tradition, though he has replaced speculation about Josephus's biographical-psychological shifts with careful literary comparison and weighing of logical alternatives.

Why, then, did Josephus compose our *Life*? Cohen sensibly first tried to figure out what Justus might have said to attract Josephus's digression against him.

The digression would make little sense if Justus had accused the captured general of having once been a rebel, or even if he had attacked Josephus as a historian, given also that Josephus was not writing for money. In fact, the digression is mostly about the blame for Tiberias's revolt. When King Agrippa died (in 92 C.E.), Cohen proposed, Tiberias's leaders must have been eager to recover their pre-Agrippa status, on a par with that of Sepphoris (cf. Justus's speech, *Life* 37–40). But their participation in the revolt, which Vespasian had needed to suppress, would have damaged their case. Justus therefore produced his account now, in this new situation after Agrippa's death, in part to charge Josephus with forcing his otherwise loyal city into revolt—an old but newly relevant matter. That is why this question dominates Josephus's digression against Justus (Cohen 1979, 137–140).

Cohen thus agreed with the standard view that Justus's work spurred Josephus into action (1979, 126–128). But finding little structure or method in the *Life*, like Laqueur, he imagined Josephus not only repackaging old notes for this new purpose (not *Judean War* itself), but also taking the opportunity to work up at least five other themes having nothing to do with Justus, for some other uncertain audiences who might read the work. For them, Josephus dwelt on his pedigree and (putative) Pharisaic allegiance—this theme being aimed largely at the Yavnean leaders of the new rabbinic movement (Cohen 1979, 144–151)—his brilliance in fighting the Romans but also his pro-Roman sympathies, and the character Philip ben Jacimus (Cohen 1979, 144–169).

Cohen is surely right that the *Life* makes little sense as reworking of *Judean War*, given the glaring inconsistencies (see below). Of the remaining options, that Josephus wrote it as a free creation from impaired memory or that he reverted to *Judean War*'s sources, he prefers the latter (1979, 77). But it is not clear how that scenario would solve the problem of the glaring differences, or explain Josephus's procedure: troubling to go back to old notes when provoked by Justus, but making such a shambles of the result. Cohen discounts the possibility of a new literary creation, it seems, because he finds so little rationale or structure in it (1979, 169–170). We need to examine this question more closely.

3.3 Purpose and Life-Writing in Rome

Several contributions following Cohen's, agreeing that Justus's challenge cannot explain very much, even if it was on Josephus's mind as a provocation, and finding more coherence in the work, have offered other explanations. Rajak (1983, 146–155, esp. 154) thinks that the *Life* makes best sense as Josephus's effort, as a prominent survivor, to explain to the Jewish-Judean aristocracy of the Diaspora why, in the context of this national debacle, he failed as a moderate commander “to master the Galilee” and was rejected by

the authorities. Josephus's digression on Justus is just that, incidental. Bilde (1988, 110–113), rejecting all defensive motives and sidelining Justus, briefly argues that Josephus writes to establish his personal qualifications: his priestly ancestry for *Judean Antiquities* and his personal experience of combat for *Judean War*. Neyrey (1994, 178–188) shows that the *Life* exhibits all the standard components of ancient encomium: you praised someone by surveying his ancestry, youth, political and military achievements, friends, benefits, and so on. My commentary on the *Life* (Mason 2001) seeks to develop these perspectives in light of Josephus's Roman context.

We might usefully glance at contemporary examples, to see both see how an author could make such bold claims as Josephus does and how a “life” could be focused disproportionately on one brief period (thus far Cohen 1979, 101–109).

Biography had been central to Greek literature and rhetoric from the start. Homer's great works were, in some sense, lives of Achilles and Odysseus. Later historians would highlight important individuals (Herodotus's Croesus and Persian kings; Thucydides' Pericles), or indeed write lives of great men (Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, *Cyropaedia*). Rhetoricians would drill into their elite students a prescribed model for praising a man's character (invertible if the need was to vilify): portray his illustrious ancestry, precocious youth, early signs of divine favor/protection, courageous public and military service, incorruptibility when tested, high-status friends and their generous benefits in recognition of his character, and his own treatment of friends and enemies (e.g., Cicero, *Part. or.* 75–82; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.15). But it was in the late Roman Republic, in the fierce contests of great men for primacy, that autobiography seems to have found its voice (Misch 1950, 1.177–338).

In his review of Rome's great orators, Cicero describes a contest between the patrician M. Aemilius Scaurus and the Stoic P. Rutilius Rufus for the consulship of 115 B.C.E. Scaurus won, Rutilius sued for bribery, and Scaurus countersued on the same charge. Scaurus at some point produced a three-volume work, *On the Events of His Own Life* (*Brut.* 112–113). We naturally infer that its concern was to celebrate and defend his luminous character. Cicero himself, though a prolific writer in the political epicenter, faced frustration in getting word of his brilliant career out to a wide enough audience. He sent friends highly rhetorical accounts—in Greek, Latin, and celebratory verse—to provide all the source material they would need to write up his story. One begged off on the ground that he could hardly improve on Cicero, while another had already written a “rough and bare” version. The orator grudgingly appreciated the effort, which had the appeal of a woman who wears no perfume (*Att.* 1.19; 2.20). Most affecting is Cicero's all-out plea to the best historian of his generation, Lucceius, to mention him often and lavishly, ignoring the sober “laws of history” in this one case—and to do it soon, so that Cicero might enjoy some of the glory before his death (*Fam.*

After a tumultuous political career that had seen him exiled and would see him murdered, Cicero contemplated writing his own life—as many great Romans had done, he notes. But he knew the pitfalls. Laudatory accounts are more persuasive if someone else does them. In writing about oneself, one must restrain praise. And such apparent immodesty puts off some of the people most desired as audiences. These examples illustrate the blurred relationships among historiography, rhetoric, biography, and autobiography in the first century (cf. Pelling 2006).

In the decade in which Josephus completed his *Judean Antiquities-Life*, his younger contemporary Tacitus produced a biography of his late father-in-law (ca. 98 C.E.). Tacitus begins with a reflection on the nature of life-writing in the case of great men, highlighting the tension between recording one's own virtues and leaving it to others. The consuls Scaurus and Rutilius furnish examples of better times, when public figures could write of their own virtues without fear or shame. Having recently emerged from Domitian's paranoid reign, when any hint of moral greatness would be snuffed out, Tacitus ostentatiously requests pardon even for writing the biography of another great man (*Agr.* 1).

The *Agricola* is a work full of paradox and puzzle (Whitmarsh 2006), especially if we would insist on clear genre distinctions, but similarities with Josephus's *Life* make it worth a look. First, it has a degree of ring composition, in that the opening (4–9) and closing (44–46) paragraphs focus on the subject's general character and personal life. In between, Tacitus takes up *Agricola*'s most glorious period as military commander, though this runs to years (in Britain) rather than Josephus's months (in Galilee). Throughout, the author saturates the story with the language of moral quality.

Thus: *Agricola* was born in an ancient and famous (*vetere et inlustri*) city, from a grandfather of the highest equestrian rank and a Senator father, distinguished for eloquence and wisdom; his mother was a woman of singular virtue. A boyhood spent in excellent pursuits was assisted by his place of retreat from the snares of Roman life: Massilia. As a youth, his soul burned with a love of the philosophical life. He would have pursued it with a devotion unsuited to a man with public responsibilities, had not his mother's practical wisdom restrained him (4). As was normal for a man of his class, he began his public life as *tribunus laticlavius* in a legion, where he proved himself—in contrast to the norm of lazy young men—devoted, serious, and brave (5). He then married a woman from a glorious birth-line (*splendidis natalibus ortam*). In his first province, with the financial responsibilities of a quaestor, he proved himself incorruptible amidst great temptation (6), and his praetorship in Rome was marked by a balance of suitable provisions for public celebration and lack of indulgence (7). As legionary legate in Britain, *Agricola* combined discipline and success with great moderation and modesty

(7–8). Acknowledging his virtue, Vespasian bestowed singular honors: adlection among the patricians, a praetorian province, finally the consulship (9). Says Tacitus, “To speak of blamelessness and self-control in such a man would be an affront to his excellence” (9.4). The closing paragraphs of the biography offer a moving encomium (44–46).

Both the general tenor of this account and many specific items recall Josephus’s autobiography, with the important difference that he writes of himself—and while Domitian yet lived. But the foreign captive presented no danger of the kind posed by high-status Romans. We have seen that Josephus unabashedly introduces his ancestry, achievements, and abilities. He likewise concludes the *Life* (430): “These, then, are the things that occurred throughout my entire life; from them let others judge my character (*to êthos*) as they might wish.” We turn, then, to the content and structure of Josephus’s little work, asking how and to what extent it works as a portrait of his character by ancient standards, with abundant examples and little remainder.

3.4 Contents, Structures, Devices

Life’s contents may be readily summarized, though of course the groupings and headings are mine and open to debate.

1. Ancestry, education, and juvenile honors (1–12a)

Ancestry (1–6)

Education (7–12a)

4. Public life (12b–413)

A. Beginnings (12b–29)

Qualification for leadership: embassy to Rome (13–16)

Origins of mission to Galilee (17–29)

D. Fulfilment of basic mission in Galilee, early opposition (30–188)

Survey of Galilean situation, featuring Philip ben Jacimus at Gamala (30–63)

Confidence-building measures with populace, fortifications, amid resistance and revolt against Josephus led by John of Gischala (64–188)

Featured: John’s attempt to lead Tiberias against Josephus (85–103)

H. Delegation from Jerusalem sent to replace Josephus (189–335)

Delegation’s origin in John’s machinations and mandate

(189–203)

Josephus's despair—and reassuring dream-vision (204–212)

First exchanges with delegation (213–241)

Confrontation at Gabara (242–265)

Josephus's counter-embassy to Jerusalem (266–270)

Confrontation at Tiberias (271–304)

Josephus confounds, captures, expels delegation (303–335)

P. Digression against Justus of Tiberias, lying historian (335–367)

Q. Josephus's successes, opponents' failures (368–413)

John of Gischala neutralized (368–372)

Josephus humiliates uncooperative Sepphoris (373–380)

Josephus threatens Tiberias (381–389)

Justus of Tiberias flees (390–393)

Sepphoris narrowly escapes Josephus as Romans arrive (394–397)

Agrippa's royal troops checked by Josephus's army (498–406)

Philip, son of Jacimus, rescued from unjust punishment (407–409)

Justus of Tiberias condemned by Vespasian, though spared (410)

Summary remarks (411–413)

5. Josephus's domestic life, continued (414–429)

In Alexandria and the Jerusalem area with Titus (414–422)

In Rome and benefits from Flavian rulers (423–429)

6. Epilogue (430)

This outline already suggests a family resemblance with Tacitus's *Agricola*, which becomes clear in the details. Having introduced the *Life* in the *Judean Antiquities*, Josephus need waste no time in getting to the point: "My ancestry is rather distinguished," he opens (*Life* 1). On both paternal and maternal sides, he makes his rhetorical point clear, even if the dates and arithmetic remain fuzzy: I come from the best possible Judean stock (1–6). His father was a particularly eminent man, in the greatest city of the Judeans (7). As a

boy, Josephus distinguished himself for insight, memory, and understanding of the laws (7–9). His unique talents led him not only to explore all the Judean philosophical schools, from age sixteen, but also to become a devotee (*zêlôtês*) of the most rigorous teacher and the simplest imaginable life in the desert. That period had to end, of course, and at age nineteen he returned to the *polis* to take his place in public life (10–12).

For his transitional experience, the young Judean had no avenue to a legionary tribunate as Agricola had. But his contemporary Plutarch would observe that young Greek statesmen with no opportunity for military glory (under Rome) might prove themselves in public lawsuits, and especially in embassies to the emperor, which “require a man of determination who possesses both courage and intellect” (*Mor. [Praec.]* 805a–b). Josephus opens his public career, gliding silently over seven years, with just such an embassy to Nero’s court in Rome. Although a shipwreck claimed most of his shipmates, he was spared by divine protection and achieved his aim of liberating distinguished compatriots, returning with abundant gifts from Nero’s wife (13–16).

This tone of moral celebration is matched at the end of the work by Josephus’s detailed account of benefactions received from the powerful and his generous treatment of friends in turn (414–429). Although he was in no position to be adlected to the Senate or among the patricians, he can claim the singular distinction of being chosen as Titus’s traveling companion for the ship voyage to Rome ahead of the triumph (422). Among his many tokens of honor, Josephus dwells on the distinguished ancestry of his current wife (427).

If a moral purpose is clear in the opening and closing sections of both lives, also in the central narrative no event is recorded simply as a matter of getting the dates or facts correct. In Josephus’s case, virtually every episode in which he appears illustrates his courage and resourcefulness (114ff., 141ff., 165ff., 236ff., 283ff., 324ff., 373ff., 394ff., 398ff.), loyalty (62, 212ff.), piety and divine protection (14–15, 47–48, 80ff., 155ff., 208ff., 299ff.), justice (79, 128ff., 149ff., 331ff.), clemency (30–31, 82, 102, 112–113, 169ff., 242–245, 262ff., 304ff., 381ff.), liberality and treatment of friends (97ff., 230ff., 246ff., 252ff., 417ff.), patience (317ff.), prudence (17ff., 72, 77, 174ff., 185ff., 294ff.), or self-control and incorruptibility (67ff., 79–80, 266, 336ff.)—including a sexual restraint uncommon to young men with military power (80, 259). The story truly is about his character, and the wretchedness of his adversaries.

To help expose a subject’s virtues, rhetoric favoured the technique of comparison (*comparatio*) with a less worthy or utterly despicable figure. Just as Tacitus throws young Agricola’s financial probity into relief by contrasting him with his boss and would-be accomplice, the proconsul of Asia (*Agr.* 6), Josephus contrasts his refusal to accept even the tithes due him as a priest (*Life* 80) with his colleagues’ naked greed and easy corruptibility (63, 73). As the outline above suggests, however, his more enduring rhetorical foils are

John of Gischala, the delegation from Jerusalem, and finally Justus of Tiberias.

Another literary technique, in this case for building suspense and sustaining interest, is Josephus's habit of beginning a story and bringing it to a critical point, only to leave it hanging for later resolution. So Philip, son of Jacimus's life-threatening plight is detailed at *Life* 46–61, but King Agrippa will not learn whether he is dead or alive until 179–181, and the vicious rumours about him generated by Varus are quashed only at the end (407–409). Early in the piece Josephus describes how, when certain militant Galileans plundered Antipas's palace in Tiberias, he rescued the goods and handed them over to a royal-friendly group for safekeeping (66–69). We do not learn what has become of them until *Life* 295–296, where they return to play a crucial part in the story, placing Josephus in jeopardy. Again he introduces certain foreign noble refugees from King Agrippa's territory who had come to join the revolt, and the struggle he faced in protecting them against those who would force them to circumcise (112–113), but he discloses their fate only later (149–153).

The many examples of this A-B-A technique, which Josephus employs also in his *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities*, lead us to ask whether the *Life* has, like them, a concentric pattern overall. Given what we have already observed in relation to the work's matching opening and closing sections, it should not surprise us to find more of the same, but the clarity of the concentric structure in the *Life* is surprising.

First, those opening and closing sections (1–29; 414–429) do not merely host similar subject matter; the specific parallels of content and language are striking. Both feature Josephus's voyage from Judea to Rome, divine (as distinct from human) provision for him (15, 425), extreme dangers (14, 416), conspicuous benefits from an emperor's wife (16, 429—perhaps attenuating his connections with Nero and Domitian), his brother (8, 419), children (5, 426–427), and anonymous accusers (6, 416). Only at the end of the Introduction and beginning of the Conclusion does Josephus refer readers to the *Judean War* for accurate details (27, 412). No reader could miss the similar feel and the sense of completion created by this narrative frame.

Moving inward from that frame, we find many anticipations near the beginning of what will come near the end. Justus is introduced early (36–42), then addressed at length later (336–367, 390–393), and the diction of the later passages recalls the earlier parallels (“revolutionary activities,” “proceed toward weapons,” emphasis on education, his recent book). Although John of Gischala is more continuously present, he emerges from Gischala as a troublemaker for Josephus at *Life* 70–76, until Josephus is finally able to confine him to his lair, cowed and beaten (372). Early on, Josephus writes to Jerusalem's leaders for confirmation of his mandate (62–63); only after many trials does he decisively receive their clear support (309).

Most impressive are two major revolts against Josephus's leadership by the people of Tiberias, led by John of Gischala. Sitting at the one-quarter and three-quarter marks of the narrative (85–103, 271–308/335), they share a remarkable number of features. The first begins with John's arrival for (deceptively) "the care of the body" at the nearby springs (85), a phrase that Josephus will use again only of himself (genuinely) at the end of the second revolt (329). In both stories, Josephus is warned of the rebellion by a certain Silas—of whom he claims to have spoken earlier (89, 272). *Life's* only two references to a stadium come in each passage (92, 331). In both, Josephus addresses the populace and then has to flee the mob, apparently by secret passage, to the lake, where he escapes on a boat to safer Tarichea—"against expectation" (*para doxan, aprosdokêtos*; 96, 304). At the conclusion of both episodes, the generous Josephus must vigorously dissuade his loyal Galileans from attacking John, who temporarily retreats to Gischala (97–101, 305–308).

Given such clear movement toward and then away from a center, is there a narrative fulcrum of some kind around *Life's* middle section? The printed Niese text comprises 15,835 words. If we look for something significant around the halfway point, we indeed find an important though seldom discussed episode. Namely, Josephus hears from his father in Jerusalem about the delegation being dispatched to bring him back dead or alive. Overcome with anguish, he decides to return to Jerusalem of his own accord. But the people will not let him go (202–207). While deeply perturbed, he has a "wonderful sort of dream," in which a figure stands over him and reassures him of future greatness, even in combat against the Romans (209). This recognition (Aristotle's *anagnôrisis*) begins a reversal or undoing (*peripeteia*) of the narrative flow to this point. Suddenly discovering a courage that will preserve him through the end, Josephus enlarges and musters his forces for the campaign ahead (210–215). As it happens, this scene falls in the dead center of the work. The exact halfway point of the Niese text is the 7,918th word, which comes in the middle of *Life* 214. A bare sentence and half earlier comes this narrative reversal, in Josephus's decision to stay and fight (*Life* 212 ends at word 7,857).

This kind of ring-composition is not a science, of course. Seeding a narrative with elements that will return in a *roughly* reverse order serves aesthetic purposes. It satisfies a general (and famously Greek) taste for symmetry, enfolding the entire text in a "periodic" sort of coil. It might aid memory and also provide a vivid sense of closure, as what was wrapped with increasing tightness begins to unfold. Most importantly, it heightens the emotional and sometimes tragic tone (as in *War* and *Antiquities*), as we watch characters caught willy-nilly in a cosmic drama (see [Chapter 1](#) by Mason on *War* in this volume). At any rate, the fulcrum is undeniably there, in *Life's* only dream-revelation. In the paragraphs immediately before and after the dream, for example, Josephus uses four phrases to describe the emotional people's

responses to him, in one sequence beforehand and then in reverse order afterward. Moving out from the center: “women and children” (207, 210), “they were begging” (206, 210), [not to] “leave them in the lurch” (205, 210), and “their territory” (205, 210).

Although the *Life* lacks *Judean War*’s important speeches, it reflects a similar view of the speech-reality relationship. The whole narrative elaborates a “double game,” in which nothing is as it appears and everyone, including Josephus, is readily saying things he does not mean, and which are not true. Programmatic is the decision of Jerusalem’s elite, after openly cautioning the people about revolt against Rome and finding themselves in mortal peril, to profess agreement with popular sentiment (*Life* 21–22). From now on, Josephus will *play the role* of a rebel commander against King Agrippa, whom he actually respects, and the Romans, with whom he seeks peace. He quotes Justus of Tiberias to show that man’s amazing skill at manipulating the masses with words. His fault is not that, but the moral defect of narrow self-aggrandisement (36–40). Josephus himself creates an unexpected crisis when he declares that he has been sent to demolish Antipas’s former palace, in an effort to win over Tiberias’s malcontents, and is unexpectedly taken too seriously (65–69). In the service of his noble aims and good character, he dissembles whenever necessary (126–131, 136–144, 324–326). But everyone is doing it. He includes an entertaining exchange of mutually deceptive letters between himself and the Jerusalem delegates (217–236; cf. 285–290). Irony is pervasive and essential to the story.

3.5 Relation to *Judean War 2* and Historical Utility

When Josephus refers *Life*’s audiences to the *Judean War* for a “(more) accurate/precise account” (27, 412), we can only wonder whether he is having a laugh, or mocking the earnest efforts of later scholars. In spite of our powerful inclination to find a core of basic events, allowing for understandable variation, the differences between the two accounts of his life resist happy reconciliation. These appear both in the internal content of episodes and, at least as worryingly, in the overall sequences of cause and effect. In limited space here I can only alert the reader to the problem with a few examples, to show that the situation precludes any simple effort to declare one of the two versions *reliable*.

As for overall structure, *Judean War 2* presents the following main events and narrative logic. (1) Josephus is one of several generals chosen to command a sub-theater of the war: Galilee and Gamala. He rushes north from Jerusalem to recruit and train 100,000 soldiers and fortify the towns (2.566–579). (2) He is soon opposed by John of Gischala, a local troublemaker engaged in slippery business practices to lift himself out of poverty (2.585–594). (3) Young

militants from Dabaritta, after robbing a steward of King Agrippa II as he traveled nearby, bring the proceeds to their new commander in Tarichea. Josephus tries secretly to return the property to the king, but he is exposed and his life endangered. He singles out the ringleaders and flogs them within an inch of their lives (2.595–613). (4) John tries to foment rebellion from Josephus in Tiberias. Josephus not only stymies his effort but persuades John's 3,000 followers to abandon him (2.614–625), forcing him into surreptitious plots. (5) John persuades the Jerusalem authorities to send a four-man delegation to remove Josephus. Although they quickly win over Galilee's major centers, Josephus outwits them and quickly sends them home (2.626–632). (6) The Tiberians rebel against Josephus on their own, appealing to King Agrippa for help. Josephus uses clever tricks to subdue them, punishing a ringleader named Cleitus with the self-administered severing of a hand (2.633–645). (7) Tiberias and Sepphoris revolt from Josephus. After allowing his soldiers to plunder both cities as a lesson, in the interest of winning their gratitude and trust, he orders the booty restored to its owners (2.645–666).

Life's narrative logic and sequence cannot be reconciled with *Judean War's* account. Square brackets draw attention to differences in order. (1) Josephus is dispatched with two other priests to pacify Galilee and await events (28–30). As he shifts roles to become a commander, he gathers a force numbering in the hundreds, eventually a few thousand (90, 118, 213, 321). (2) John of Gischala is the wealthy leading man of Gischala, well connected in Jerusalem (43–45, 70–76, 189–192). [4] Although John foments revolt in Tiberias during an ostensible visit to the baths, that episode cannot result in his loss of followers, which in turn cannot explain his arrangement of the delegation, because this is only the beginning of his activity in *Life*. Those elements from *Judean War* are postponed to the end here (370–371). Many other features of this first Tiberian revolt are re-used, as we have seen, for *Life's* third revolt (the second led by John), three-quarters of the way through the story (287–335), which has no parallel in *Judean War*. [3] Young Dabarittans rob *the wife* of Agrippa's steward (he does not appear), and steal different things. Josephus's actions and speeches are also different in content and strategy. [6] Though it comes after the delegation episode in *Judean War*, the Tiberians' revolt and failed appeal to Agrippa come well before that crucial episode in *Life* (155–174), and many details are different—including Josephus's order that Cleitus cut off *both* his hands (*Life* 172). [5] Now comes the dominant story in *Life*, the detailed account of the delegation (189–335). Its content is different and largely incompatible with *Judean War's* version (below). (7) *Life* separates the two final revolts of Sepphoris and Tiberias (373–389). It does not mention the return of plunder as a goodwill gesture in these contexts, though that does come after the third Tiberian revolt, not mentioned in *Judean War* (*Life* 333–335).

It is not only that events have a different sequence and different causes in *Life*,

but the episodes themselves can have astonishingly different content. Consider the single most important event of Josephus's Galilean career: the delegation from Jerusalem. The accounts agree that there were four men, but who were they? *Judean War* 2.628 names them as Yoedrus, son of Nomicus, Ananias Sadouki, and two "sons of Jonathan" named Simon and Judas. *Life* 197 has two non-priestly Pharisees named Jonathan and Ananias, a priest-Pharisee named Yozer, and a young man of chief-priestly ancestry named Simon. In that story, the Pharisee Jonathan is so clearly the leader that they are usually called "Jonathan's group" (199–201, 216, 226–232, etc.). Our willingness to allow that people often had two different names, or that the Greek spelling of Hebrew names would vary (e.g., Yozer and Yoedrus are likely the same), cannot help us reconcile the two groups—unless we resort to the fundamentalist wheeze that would imagine seven or eight men in the group. For *Judean War* has no Jonathan at all. If we speculated that *Judean War*'s Judas son of Jonathan happened also to be a Jonathan, we would be checkmated by the fact that *Judean War*'s Simon and Judas/Jonathan are *brothers*, whereas *Life*'s Simon has a chief-priestly pedigree, while its Jonathan is a lay Pharisee.

3.6 Conclusion

These observations require us to distinguish between literary-rhetorical and historical concerns. We have seen that the *Life* is thematically and structurally coherent. This does not mean that it is perfect: it has a few loose ends, such as references to things already said that have not been said (as far as we know). But even the lauded *Judean War* has some of those puzzles, the *Judean Antiquities* more, and anyone who has written or edited substantial academic pieces should hesitate to accuse. The similar style contributes to the same atmosphere of a unified story, permeated by the ironic double game that the times necessitated, its mid-section embellished in slow motion. This analysis removes a basic support from the image of Josephus responding to Justus's challenge by cooking up a stew from warmed-up, decades-old leftovers. The present work is a respectable unity, suiting a single compositional situation: Josephus's desire to celebrate his life and character. This is true even though we cannot know why he made the decisions he did, for example, to feature Philip ben Jacimus. (Were Philip's relatives, or the man himself, among his friends?) Those episodes obviously contribute to various themes—Gamala's situation, King Agrippa's character, divine vindication of the just—but still we may wonder.

On the historical side, the many general and specific differences confirm that in writing the *Life* Josephus did not pore over an unwieldy scroll of *Judean War* 2. But the notion that he returned to *Judean War*'s sources would create

as many problems. Why would he have done that, and how would that explain the same differences? We should rather imagine him freely composing the *Life* for his new situation upon completing the *Judean Antiquities*. He wants to celebrate his life and achievements with the people who have shown such interest in his work in Rome, especially Epaphroditus and his circle. They must have been well disposed, uncritical, and trusting—just the group with whom Josephus could expand as he wished on his character without fear of heckling. Of course, he knows that in his prime he composed the famed *Judean War*, and he proudly refers to it for “accurate details.” But just as academics do not spend their time re-reading their youthful publications, he had no reason to revisit *that* story. He is recalling his own life, after all. Apparently he has forgotten much of what he wrote in the definitive history, even the names and relationships of those men from Jerusalem who once loomed so large. But such disparities do not visibly worry him. Everything in his environment encouraged variation in storytelling, new arrangements, and the extraction of different moral lessons from the same events. Who could possibly care if he told stories differently—except modern historians?

For the new work he exploits an array of adversaries, rivals, and accusers, using the dark screen of their villainy to illuminate his virtues. These range from the infamous John (exhibited in the Flavian triumph) to the what’s-their-names from Jerusalem. Justus with his new accusations, far from worrying Josephus, joins the ranks of laughable losers who have dared to challenge our man. His confidence in ridiculing all such pests prepares for his rough handling of anti-Judean spokesmen, *seriatim*, in the *Against Apion*.

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FURTHER READING

Students should begin their research on *Life* with the following scholarship:

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CHAPTER 4

Against Apion

John Barclay

4.1 Context: Josephus in Rome

Josephus's apologetic treatise, *Against Apion* (for the title, see below), is probably the last of his literary productions, and is arguably the most skilful. In the Introduction and Conclusion (*Apion* 1.1; 2.287), he links this treatise to his *Judean Antiquities*, complaining that some have doubted his claims regarding the 5,000-year history of Jews/Judeans (I use the terms interchangeably), on the grounds that they were "not worthy of any mention by the most renowned Greek historians" (*Apion* 1.2; all translations from Barclay 2007, BJP). He thus positions this new work as the sequel to and defence of his earlier twenty-volume history, dedicating it to the same patron, Epaphroditus (1.1; 2.1, 297). At the end of *Judean Antiquities* he had promised to write a four-volume work on the essence of God and the reasons for the law's commands and prohibitions (*Ant.* 20.268; cf. 4.198), but *Against Apion* is not this work: although the summary of the law included in Book 2 (2.190–218) has some elements matching that description, it has another primary agenda. Something has caused Josephus to change his mind, perhaps, as he says, the need to bolster the credibility of his *Judean Antiquities*. His apologetic tone here matches his personal apologetic in his *Life*, with some overlap in content regarding his credentials as a historian (*Apion* 1.46–56, cf. *Life* 336–367). It seems that after decades spent salvaging the reputation of his people and interpreting their history for a non-Judean audience, he is still attempting to overcome significant prejudices stacked up against both himself and his people.

It is impossible to give this work a precise date. It is certainly later than the *Judean Antiquities* (published in 93/94 C.E.), but how much later is unclear. Although the 90s were turbulent times in Rome (with the assassination of Domitian in 96 C.E., and the death of his successor, Nerva, in 98 C.E., followed by the accession of Trajan), *Against Apion* makes no reference to contemporary political events or specifiable social conditions. If we could identify precisely the Epaphroditus to whom the work is dedicated, we might be able to fix a last possible date for its composition, but unfortunately we cannot (see Barclay 2007, xxvi–xxviii, 3–4). We can only place the work some time in the mid- to late-90s, or possibly the next decade, depending on how long Josephus himself lived (another unknown). Whether it was written

before or after his *Life* is also a matter of uncertainty.

We do know that this period was one of special controversy for Jews and Jewish culture precisely in Rome, where Josephus was writing. Among the many ways in which the Flavian emperors had celebrated their victory at Jerusalem (70 C.E.) and humiliated the Jewish nation was by diverting the former Jewish temple tax (on an expanded basis) into Roman coffers, known as the *fiscus Judaicus*. There is good evidence that Domitian (the last of the Flavian dynasty) gave special attention to this tax, for fiscal or political reasons, and encouraged legal proceedings against people accused of dodging its payment (Suetonius, *Dom.* 12.2). Suetonius mentions two kinds of people who were brought to court: those considered to be living “the Judean life” (*Judaica vita*) without admitting themselves to be Judean/Jews; and those who hid their ethnic origin in order to avoid the tax levied on their people (he remembers seeing a ninety-year-old man stripped in court to prove if he was circumcised). From this evidence, it appears that both a financial penalty and a stigma could attach to being thought “Judean” in Rome; that it was common enough for non-Jews to adopt Jewish practices, making it feasible for others to accuse them of being “Jews” without owning up to it; and that this proved a useful weapon for getting one’s opponents legally disgraced. When Nerva came to power (96 C.E.), he had special coins minted with the legend “the cessation of malicious accusations concerning the Judean tax” (*FISCI JUDAICI CALUMNIA SUBLATA*). If the point was worth advertising, the trials had clearly caused enough social mischief for people to be relieved to see them over. There had clearly been a number of trials in which people had attempted to harm their opponents by attaching to them the name or the practices of Jews/Judeans (see Goodman 2005).

At the same time (the end of Domitian’s reign), we hear of a number of high-profile political trials in which Domitian tried to neutralize threats from leading Roman families. According to Suetonius, this included T. Flavius Clemens, a relative of Domitian, and the consul in 95 C.E., who was tried and executed (*Dom.* 15.1): Dio tells us that the charge levelled against him was “atheism,” charge on which many others were condemned, who “drifted into the customs of the Judeans” (67.14.1–2). In a slightly later context he says that Nerva released those who were on trial for “impiety” and forbade accusations regarding either “impiety” or “the Judean life” (68.1.2). It is not entirely clear what was going on (see Williams 1990), but it seems that those suspected of adopting Judean customs (perhaps falsely, or to a very minor degree) were open to accusation that they were abandoning the worship of the Roman gods, a charge with very serious political implications since the gods were the protectors of the Roman state and closely identified with the emperor himself. It was obviously spectacular, scandalous, and (to any reasonable mind) implausible that high-ranking members of the Roman elite would join Judeans in refusing to take part in iconic, polytheistic or non-Judean cult. But

a little later, both Juvenal (*Sat.* 14.96–106) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.5) complain about Romans who are drawn into Judean interests to the extent of abandoning Roman cultic practice and worshipping “nothing but the clouds,” so the scenario could obviously be imagined by a suspicious emperor looking for reasons to dispose of his enemies.

In fact, taken together, the evidence suggests *both* that the Jewish/Judean population and their customs were well known in Rome, drawing some admiration and even imitation; *and* that this matter was controversial, resented by some, and open to misunderstanding and suspicion. Literary evidence from Rome at this time corroborates the prevalence of an anti-Judean prejudice. The poet Martial persistently mocks Judeans, and especially their habit of male circumcision (e.g., 7.30.5; 7.35.3–4), while Quintilian (tutor to Domitian’s adopted heirs) speaks of Moses as the founder of the “Judean superstition,” rendering the Judeans a nation “ruinous to others” (*Inst.* 3.7.21). Their younger contemporaries, Juvenal and Tacitus, also collate a range of negative stereotypes. Juvenal associates Judeans with the “effluent” which has poured from the East into Rome (*Sat.* 3.10–18), and mocks their peculiar customs regarding Sabbath, pork, and circumcision (14.96–106). In an extended digression on the Jewish people (ca. 107 C.E.), Tacitus rehearses a range of views concerning Jewish origins, but gives credence to a tale that they were a diseased offshoot of the Egyptian people, whose desert wanderings provide etiological explanation for their (purported) worship of an ass and abstention from pork, (*Hist.* 5.2–4). While his tone is not consistently negative, he scorns Moses, who introduced customs completely at odds with other cultures. Emphasizing Judean contrariety, isolation and aggressive hostility, Tacitus concludes that Judeans regard as profane all that “we” (Romans) hold sacred and permit all that “we” abhor (5.4.1). We get the sense that in the upper (educated) circles of Rome, Jewish customs were considered quirky, ridiculous, anti-social and “unRoman.” That is precisely the impression that a good deal of Josephus’s *Against Apion* is designed to dispel (cf. Gruen 2002, 41–53).

4.2 Contents: Topics, Structure, Genre, Title, and Sources

Against Apion is introduced as a response to doubts, questions, and slanders: Josephus says he has written this work,

[S]ince I see that a considerable number of people pay attention to the slanders spread by some out of malice, and disbelieve what I have written on ancient history, but adduce as proof that our people is of more recent origin that it was not thought worthy of any mention by the most renowned

Josephus thus slants his work initially against those with excessive confidence in the Greeks, and the work begins with a prolegomenon (1.6–56) which lambasts Greek historiography (as recent, poorly evidenced, and stronger on rhetoric than fact); this stands in contrast with the secure historiography of Egyptians and Babylonians, and in particular of Jews/Judeans, whose limited twenty-two-book canon is taken to be proof of their concern for reliable, agreed fact (1.28–56). Josephus then declares his overall agenda: to respond to those who make much of Greek silence regarding the Jews, to provide evidence for Jewish antiquity from the literature of others, and to refute the slanders directed against Jews (1.57–59). The first task is dealt with rapidly (1.60–68): the Greeks and Jews co-existed but never came into contact, so one can hardly expect the Greeks to write about them (or vice versa). The second, however, occupies the whole of 1.69–218. Here Josephus gathers, cites, and comments upon evidence from Egyptians (1.73–105), Phoenicians (1.106–127), Chaldeans (1.128–160), and Greeks themselves (1.161–214), all of which, he claims, prove the great antiquity of Jews. In fact, some of this evidence is manipulated by Josephus's apologetic agenda to create "references" to Jews/Judeans where none exist: Manetho's account of invading shepherd-"Hyksos" does not refer to Jews, nor does Choerilus's description of tonsured warriors from the "Solyman hills." Some of the non-Judean "witnesses" have been fabricated: the "Hecataeus" cited by Josephus (1.183–204) is probably not a Greek but a Jewish imitator. Some of the evidence hardly proves great antiquity: Agatharchides, for instance, refers to events no earlier than the Ptolemaic period (1.205–212). But Josephus is delighted to gather so much evidence from sources whose authority he is at pains to defend (even in relation to Greeks!). He shows some skill in connecting a disparate collection of sources to the history and customs of Jews, and concludes that "all agree in bearing witness to our antiquity" (1.217).

At 1.219, Josephus begins the second main task of his work: "to prove false the libels and insults that certain people have aimed at our people." First he gathers material from three "Egyptian" authors who told similar tales regarding the origins of the Judeans/Jews as a diseased segment of the Egyptian population who were expelled on the orders of the gods and wandered across the desert (Manetho: 1.227–287; Chaeremon: 1.288–303; Lysimachus: 1.304–320). In all three cases, Josephus cites excerpts from their narratives (perhaps with some adaptations), and responds with literary critique and historical argument proving these tales to be self-contradictory nonsense. Then, in a much longer engagement that occupies the first half of Book 2 (2.1–44), Josephus turns on Apion, an Alexandrian scholar-politician who had been prominent in the complaints about Alexandrian Jews brought to Rome during the reigns of Gaius and Claudius. With heavy doses of personal

vituperation, Josephus answers Apion's anti-Judean stories on the exodus (2.8–32), his hostile reading of Jewish history in Alexandria (2.33–78), and a range of scurrilous remarks on the temple and other rites which he reported or made up (2.79–144, including the infamous tales of the Jews' worship of an ass, and their annual sacrifice of a Greek). Then Josephus moves into a partly different mode, an encomium of Moses and the Jewish "constitution" (2.145–286), which includes a summary of key laws and their virtues (2.190–218), and finishes with a lengthy explanation and celebration of Jewish religious difference (2.236–286, in comparison with the stupidities of Greek mythology). Although the materials in this section are quite different from the earlier parts of the work in content, style, and origin (Josephus is probably at points adapting pre-formed sources), they are integrated into the work as constituting a defense against the slanders issued by Apollonius Molon and others (2.145–150, 258).

Thus, though different scholars read the structure of the work in slightly different ways (depending on how they join or separate the final major section, 2.145–286), the best structural overview of the text is probably as follows:

1.1–5	Introduction
1.6–128	<i>Part One: The Antiquity of the Judeans</i>
1.6–56	Prolegomenon: Comparative Historiography
1.57–59	Announcement of Agenda
1.60–68	Reasons for Greek Ignorance of Judeans
1.69–218	Evidence for Judean Antiquity (Egyptian, 73–105; Phoenician, 106–127; Chaldean, 128–160; Greek, 161–214)
1.219–2.286	<i>Part Two: Refutation of Slanders</i>
1.219–226	Introduction
1.227–287	Manetho
1.288–303	Chaeremon
1.304–320	Lysimachus
2.1–144	Apion (on the exodus, 8–32; on Alexandria, 33–78; on the temple and other rites 79–144)
2.145–286	Apollonius Molon and others (introduction, 145–150; Moses and the structure of the constitution, 151–189; summary of key laws, 190–218; Judean endurance for the law, 219–235; Judean religious difference and its

2.287–296	rationale, 236–286) Conclusion
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It emerges that the two main elements in the work are proof of Judean antiquity and the refutation of a range of slanderous tales and caricatures that damaged the reputation of Judeans/Jews. Regarding antiquity, it is difficult to tell if Josephus is here reporting real doubts about the claimed 5,000-year history of Jews outlined in his *Judean Antiquities* or if he has manufactured them: even hostile accounts of the origins of the Judeans, like those summarized by Tacitus, were generally prepared to grant them antiquity (see Gruen 2005). But we can well imagine a culturally snobbish reaction to Josephus’s earlier work on the grounds that famous Greek authors never made mention of Judeans, and it is apparently this cultural prejudice, as much as anything else, that Josephus is concerned to counter. Since some Stoic philosophers considered that ancient, pre-Greek, ethnic customs could evidence an original, “natural” philosophy, Josephus was able to tap into a general intellectual interest in the antiquity of peoples outside the Greek and Roman sphere; if he could show that the Jewish people preserved ancient, independent traditions, that might help boost their general prestige.

Regarding the “slanders” Josephus here combats, we have noted above that Jews and their culture were subject to a variety of slurs in his contemporary Rome, including accounts of their “expulsion” from Egypt like those he here painstakingly and skilfully pulls apart. Some of Apion’s charges were also politically potent, regarding the Jews’ relationship with Rome (and the imperial cult); it is possible that both Apion and Chaeremon left in Rome a lasting legacy of negative opinions regarding the Jews that were still circulating in Josephus’s day. Of all these stereotypes, Judean exclusiveness was perhaps the most damaging, and it is not surprising that Josephus spends a large part of his final section (2.236–286) explaining why a certain degree of difference is both necessary and even admirable in philosophical terms, while also emphasising Judean friendliness to all who wish to join their company. He is thus careful to finish the work with a positive portrayal of the ways non-Jews imitate Judean customs, and the excellent virtues that these embody (2.279–295).

The genre of this treatise becomes increasingly clear as the work progresses. Although individual elements display a variety of characteristics (historical proof; encomium; summary of laws), the work as whole has an *apologetic* tone, answering criticisms and libels directed against the Jews/Judeans. The term “apologetic” can be broadly or narrowly defined in scholarly usage, but in its original (and proper) sense means a defence against criticism or legal charge, directed to people outside one’s own group (either to the critics themselves or to others in the position to judge the matter). From its original forensic sense (a law-court defence speech), this could encompass a variety of literary and social situations; Josephus himself compares the accusations and

defences circulating in inter-city rivalry in the Greek world (1.220–222). As we have seen, response to “slander” is signalled in the introduction as a key element in the work. Although the proof of Judean antiquity is not always conducted in this defensive (or aggressive) mode, Josephus cites all his sources as “witnesses,” as if in a legal dispute, and he regards this collection as taking the ground from under the feet of “our detractors” in “the case they mount against us” (1.72).

The apologetic tone becomes more explicit in the second main part (1.219–2.286) where the polemical tone is heightened, the slanders are represented as “accusations” (e.g., 2.4), and Josephus speaks of his own work as a “counter-statement” (2.2) and “defense” (2.147). It is often noted that the final section of this part (2.145–286) is far less dominated by named critics, and contains material that looks more like an encomium (as Josephus himself acknowledges, 2.147, 287). Certainly, taken in isolation, the laudatory account of Moses’ “theocratic” constitution, and the selection of laws and their accompanying Judean virtues, looks more like self-praise than defence, and it has sometimes been suggested that the mood and genre here switches to protreptic (a stance adopted in winning adherents to one’s cause; see Mason 1996). But, in fact, Josephus wraps this material within apologetic covers (2.145–150, 287–295), and reminds readers often enough that he still has “accusers” in mind (e.g., 2.156, 161, 236–238, 258); he thus manages to preserve the generic consistency of the whole work as an “apology.” While a number of other Judean texts from antiquity have been accorded the label “apologetic,” *Against Apion* is the purest and fullest example of this Jewish literary strategy, a phenomenon later to be imitated by Christians (see Barclay 2007, xxx–xxxvi; 2009).

The title that has become attached to this treatise, *Against Apion*, is only partly accurate in relation to its contents (only half of Book 2 responds to Apion) and was not widespread in antiquity. Josephus does not signal clearly a title for his own work (many ancient writers left such matters undetermined), and titles thus represent what early readers thought fit to grant. Our evidence here is sparse, and sometimes ambiguous, but some ancient authors describe this work as focused on “the antiquity of Judeans” (Origen and Eusebius) or, in one case, “Against the Greeks” (Porphyry). Jerome says that Josephus, “in proving the antiquity of the Judean people, wrote two books against Apion” (*Epist.* 70.3). This suggests that readers recognized the duality of the themes in this work, and found it hard to summarize them in a single title. Without a clear lead from Josephus himself, we are faced with the same difficulty. Some modern editors have chosen to use the title “On the Antiquity of the Judeans” (or “On the Primitiveness of Judaism”: “Über die Ursprünglichkeit des Judentums,” Siegert 2008), or have suggested new alternatives. It may be wisest to keep to the now traditional title, with the recognition that it is unsatisfactory.

There are a number of striking differences between *Against Apion* and Josephus's earlier works, in theme and content, which have raised questions about the extent to which he has himself developed his thinking and the extent to which he has gathered new sources to incorporate into his work (or a combination of the two). There are several references to Plato (e.g., *Apion* 2.224, 256–257) and close similarities between Josephus's description of the Judean constitution and Plato's ideal constitution in his *Laws*, which suggest the influence of Plato on Josephus's thinking (cf. Gerber 1997, 226–243). Even where Josephus discusses the same topic as in his *Judean Antiquities*, he often adopts here a different stance, as in his description of the Judean constitution (*Apion* 2.151–189), which coins a new terminology (“theocracy”) not hitherto employed in Josephus's (or any one else's) work. Josephus had summarized the Mosaic laws in *Judean Antiquities* Books 3 and 4, but does so quite differently here, with a new selection, a new set of explanations of the laws, and a special emphasis on Judean severity in punishment (*Apion* 2.190–218). Either Josephus or his assistants have conducted some significant research to track down the extensive range of non-Judean sources he cites in the first part on Judean antiquity: there are a few overlaps here with material used in the *Judean Antiquities*, but most of these sources are newly cited (and might have been useful in earlier works). But it seems that Josephus has also drawn on some Judean sources in certain parts of this work, most evidently in the final major section on the Judean constitution. Here we can track a close similarity to two other texts known to us, the sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides and the *Hypothetica* attributed to Philo. The degree of similarity is variable, but there are some relatively obscure laws that they cite in common (e.g., on not taking parents birds together with their nestlings, *Apion* 2.213) and similarities in content, emphasis, and sequence that lead most scholars to conclude that Josephus is drawing on a common Judean tradition which presented Judean customs as meeting the highest (Greek) ideals, and absorbed a number of non-Judean motifs in the process. Moreover, there are striking points of similarity between Josephus's presentation of Judaism and the work of Jewish Alexandrian intellectuals known to us (notably Aristobulus and Philo), such that it appears that Josephus was strongly influenced by them, either directly or indirectly. These Jewish sources influenced Josephus's work especially in his description of the Judean constitution (*Apion* 2.151–189) and his summary of the laws (*Apion* 2.190–218), though he has selected and adapted these traditions to meet his own needs, and has not taken them over wholesale (see Barclay 2007, 353–361).

4.3 Audience, Purpose, Impact, and Textual Tradition

Whom did Josephus hope to influence by this work, and what did he hope to achieve through it? These are often the most difficult questions to answer regarding an ancient text, since we rarely have good information about an author's context and intentions, and we often have reason to suspect a mismatch between the rhetoric of the text and its purposes and effects in the real world. This is particularly the case with regard to "apologetic" works, which are ostensibly directed at critics or at neutral observers of one's cause, but may be directed as much or more towards "insiders" in the tradition under attack, or at least have their greatest impact there. In this case we know something of the historical and social context of this treatise (see above), but we do not have access to Josephus's actual intentions, and have almost no knowledge of how this text was actually received.

It is useful to distinguish between the *declared* audience (those people the text addresses or speaks about as readers), the *implied* audience (ideal readers presupposed or constructed by the assumptions in the text regarding readers' prior knowledge or interests), the *intended* audience (those whom Josephus the author really hoped would read this work), and the *actual* audience (those who in the event actually read it). The first two are deduced from the text (and may be artificial, textual constructs); to ascertain the latter two we need to step outside of the text into the world (even the mind?) of the author and the real effects of his work.

The text is dedicated and addressed to Epaphroditus (*Apion* 1.1; 2.1, 296), described as someone who "especially loves the truth" (2.296); appended is a dedication "on your account, to those who may likewise wish to know the truth about our people" (2.296). The declared target is thus non-Jews (not "our people" themselves) who are described vaguely as wanting "to know" about the Judeans (cf. 1.3). Elsewhere the text appeals for forbearance from readers who may resent an encomium of the Jewish constitution (2.147), again signalling that it is directed towards non-Judeans.

What is here *declared* is more or less supported by what is *implied* throughout the work. *Against Apion* presupposes a broad range of cultural and historical knowledge of the Greek tradition, only some of which is explained. Introducing the disputes among Greek historians, it implies that readers will be already well informed on such matters (*Apion* 1.16); the distinctive features of Sparta and Athens, and their respective legislators, are taken to be matters of common knowledge (2.225–231), just as Greek mythology can be alluded to as if well known (2.239–249). Figures and events in Roman history (Pompey, the battle of Actium) are also presumed to be familiar. On the other hand, Judean tradition is introduced in a way that does not presume prior knowledge: Noah is given an introduction (1.130) and the label "Galilean" is taken to be strange (1.48). It is implied throughout that readers are interested to learn about the Judean people, that they are aware of negative stories and stereotypes, but that they are open to persuasion on such matters and willing

to learn “the truth.” The text thus implies a sympathetic non-Judean audience who need non-biblical and non-Judean evidence to accept Josephus’s claims for Judean antiquity, but are open to persuasion, and are liable to enjoy the text’s polemical tirades against a range of critics (all safely dead).

It is legitimate to ask to what extent the text implies a specifically *Roman* audience, or bears witness to its social and historical context in Rome. It is striking that the foil against which Josephus consistently places the Judeans is the *Greeks* (not the Romans): amidst discussion of Greek historians, Greek (and other) witnesses to Judean antiquity, and famous figures in Greek political history, there is no reference to Roman authors, Roman historians or the Roman constitution. This could be interpreted as a sign that the text inhabits debates and problematics more live in other contexts (e.g., Alexandria) than in Rome, and recycles traditions from an earlier era and another place. But the silence could also be strategic—to avoid any clash with Roman traditions. It is notable that where they are mentioned, the Romans are given a consistently positive “press” in this text: their power is backdated to an extraordinarily early period (*Apion* 1.66), they are described as the current rulers of the world (2.41) and their ‘benevolence’ is hailed (in granting citizenship, 2.40). At a sensitive point, countering Apion’s attempt to portray antagonism between the Judeans and Rome, Josephus is at pains to portray a friendly, supportive relationship (2.33–78), despite the awkwardness of Jewish non-participation in the imperial cult (2.73–78). The Judeans, he claims, were uniquely Rome’s allies and friends in the East (2.125–134); the Roman destruction of the temple, and the aftermath of the war, are handled with extreme circumspection (1.42–43; 2.131, 233). While avoiding mention of ways in which Roman culture could (and did) clash with Judean traditions, Josephus also seems to emphasize those aspects of his tradition which would chime well with conservative Roman morality: as a number of scholars have noted, in presenting Judean culture in this work, Josephus appears to put a premium on toughness, contempt for death, frugality, agricultural work, family morality, high sexual standards, and strict punishments (e.g., 2.190–218, 287–295; see Goodman 1999; Barclay 2007, 362–369). Since his criticisms of Greeks (e.g., for their lax historiography and dubious mythology) and his denigration of Egyptians (e.g., for their animal cults) also seem to match Roman stereotypes of these nations, one could conclude that the implied audience of this text is taken to share an elite Roman view of the world, even if Roman interests do not protrude everywhere in the text.

It is another matter to decide what is Josephus’s *intended* audience (which may or may not correspond with the audience implied by the text). Josephus would be an incompetent communicator if he expected to reach an audience who actually had a good deal less sympathy with his cause than is implied in the text; and given his bruising experience of the reception of his work in Rome (*Apion* 1.1–2), we may credit him with the awareness that this work

would hardly influence those with outright hostility to Judean ways. But a work addressed, as we have seen, to sympathetic non-Judeans may have been intended *also* for fellow Judeans (of his own social level and education), since we know that his *Judean War*, said to be “for the Greeks and those Romans not involved in the campaign” (*War* 1.6) was actually (also) sold by the author to high-status Judeans (*Apion* 1.51). We may thus posit (tentatively) that Josephus hoped to reach, via Epaphroditus, an audience of Romans interested in and broadly sympathetic towards Judeans, but also fellow Judeans who would be boosted in their confidence in the dignity and antiquity of their native traditions. The work thus fits, in general terms, the social conditions sketched at the outset of this chapter. In a context where a number of educated Romans were attracted (in varying degrees, and for various reasons) to some aspects of the Judean tradition, but where strongly negative opinions about Judeans also circulated, with potential political and even legal effect, Josephus counters negative impressions of Judean culture, and reinforces the credentials of his tradition in ways that might interest, or at least not offend, a Romanized audience. There is no reason to think that he hoped, specifically, to gain proselytes (*pace* Mason 1996): although the work does mention full conversion to the Judean way (2.123, 209–210, 261), this is cited to demonstrate Judean friendliness to outsiders, not to show the benefits of conversion itself. There is no doubt that Josephus would have been happy to see more non-Judeans “come to live under our laws” (2.210), but at the climax of his work he describes Gentiles imitating Judean customs (2.282–286), not becoming proselytes. Thus, Josephus’s ambition was probably to boost sympathy and support for the Judean people in a context where Judean culture was controversial enough to be used to vilify and even indict people suspected of “drifting into Judean ways.”

The actual impact of this work probably depended on Josephus’s own reputation and political/literary contacts, and the influence and efforts of the dedicatee, Epaphroditus. Unfortunately, we know nothing of their success. Josephus was known in Rome as the Judean prisoner who predicted Vespasian’s rise to power (e.g., Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.9), but no Roman author known to us cites any of his works, and he seems to have had limited access to the opinion-makers in his contemporary Rome. However, the fact that Porphyry (died c. 305 C.E.) referred to all Josephus’s main treatises, and was able to cite from *Against Apion* (2.213 in *Abst.* 4.14), indicates that pagan authors could later gain access to his works. We have no way of measuring whether Judeans themselves knew or valued this work; given Josephus’s dubious reputation (as a turncoat during the Judean War), it would not be surprising if his works gained a limited audience there. Ironically, however, his work did influence an audience neither implied nor intended, the early Christians. We have evidence, for instance, that this apologetic work was an inspiration, and a source, for Christians who wished to present their own form of apologetics in the hostile conditions of the Roman Empire. In particular, to

counter accusations of novelty, it was a common defence by Christians to assert that they were offshoots of the ancient Jewish/Judean tradition; and to prove quite how ancient this was, it was helpful to draw on some parts of Josephus's evidence in *Against Apion*. Thus, Theophilus, Tertullian, Origen and, in particular, Eusebius, made use of this text for their own apologetic agendas, in the latter case, citing quite large sections from both Books 1 and 2 (Hardwick 1996; Barclay 2007, liii–lv).

It was apparently this Christian use of *Against Apion* that preserved the text of the treatise, though only partially and very precariously so. In fact, we lack altogether the Greek of a large part of book 2 (2.52–113), a lacuna fortunately made up for by the preservation of the Latin translation of the whole work, which was commissioned by Cassiodorus in the sixth century (see [Chapter 20](#) by Leoni in this volume). This and the earliest Christian citations of the Greek text constitute, in fact, our earlier manuscript evidence for the work: our first complete Greek MS (with the lacuna) dates from the eleventh century (L). Textual critics continue to debate the relative value of other manuscript evidence and significant advances have recently been made in this matter (Siebert 2008; cf. Barclay 2007, lxi–lxiv). There are some cases where the text remains uncertain or garbled, and it is not always easy to guess what Greek lay behind the (unreliable) Latin translation in the long lacuna, but given the precarious means of transmission of ancient sources in general, we should count ourselves fortunate to possess at all this fascinating evidence for Jewish apologetics in Rome.

In the present state of scholarship, *Against Apion* is important for two main reasons. In the first place, it provides a treasure trove of sources, cited by Josephus, many of which would be otherwise unknown to us, or less certainly known from elsewhere. Egyptologists have pored over the fragments of Manetho cited or paraphrased by Josephus for the light they may shed on early Egyptian history and Ptolemaic historiography. We learn a lot about ancient opinions on Judeans and their culture from the comments, positive or critical, which Josephus cites; ironically, in combating it, Josephus provides some of our best evidence for anti-Judean sentiment in antiquity (cf. Schäfer 1997)! Sometimes these sources also shed light sideways on other matters of interest: Josephus's extended engagement with Apion (in 2.1–144) tells us much about the disputes surrounding the citizenship of Judeans in Alexandria, and illuminates the intense political and cultural battles that affected Judeans there, and in Rome, in the middle of the first century.

But it is Josephus's own engagement in these battles that draws the most attention from scholars nowadays. Watching Josephus's argumentation and rhetoric is a rewarding experience, not because he is always persuasive—by today's academic standards, many of his “proofs” and “arguments” look decidedly weak—but because they reveal much about the ways in which Jews/Judeans in antiquity positioned themselves on the cultural map. Josephus

strategically draws cultural alliances (e.g., with “philosophy” against mythology) and fixes cultural boundaries (e.g., against anything less than a severe sexual ethic); he joins in Roman denigration of “Egyptians,” flatters the Romans as “benefactors,” and aligns himself with or against “Greeks” as the argument demands. Using a postcolonial perspective, we can trace the ambiguities in his self-representation of Judean culture under the conditions of Greek cultural hegemony and Roman political power: in classic forms of “hybridity” he simultaneously accepts and unsettles the universal authority of the Greek (and Roman) tradition, adopting their values only to restructure, refocus and remind them in Jewish/Judean terms. What starts as a protest against presumed Greek cultural superiority (*Apion* 1.1–57) ends with extremely bold claims about the superiority of the Jewish tradition itself, in both antiquity and virtue (2.287–295), though the means Josephus has used to get there are largely drawn from the Graeco-Roman tradition itself (see Barclay 2005; 2007). From this perspective, there is still much to be learned about Josephus, and the Jewish apologetic tradition that he extends and refines, on the basis of this perennially fascinating treatise.

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For the Roman context of Josephus’s work, see the essays gathered in Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives, eds., *Flavius Josephus*

and Flavian Rome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Among the best individual essays devoted to this treatise are: Erich Gruen, "Greeks and Jews: Mutual Misperceptions in Josephus's *Contra Apionem*," in Carol Bakhos, ed., *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 31–51; and Martin Goodman, "Josephus' Treatise *Against Apion*," in Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price, eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 45–58.

PART II

Josephus's Literary Context

CHAPTER 5

Josephus as a Roman Historian

Steve Mason

5.1 Introduction

Was Josephus a Roman historian? Until the late 1990s (e.g., Marincola 1997), he rarely appeared in surveys of Roman writers, or Greek ones for that matter. He had the consolation prize, to be sure, of occupying the category ‘ancient Jewish historian’ alone by acclamation. Some recent studies tend to support the traditional view by finding in Josephus an essentially provincial historian, tainted by the miasma shared by his compatriots after the Great Revolt, possibly embarrassed about his Greek speech, anyway on the outer social margins of the world capital: “in all likelihood extremely lonely and extremely isolated in Rome—at least from the social-political elite” (Cotton and Eck 2005, 52; cf. Price 2005). He writes from a profoundly Judean ethos, scholars have argued, mainly concerning himself with the post-70 concerns of other Judeans throughout the Mediterranean (Rajak 2005). He was thus in the world capital but not of it, there by necessity but spending Saturday nights at home with the doors locked.

Now every scholar would concede that at least in certain respects Josephus was a Roman historian. He was a Roman citizen. He lived most of his adult life in Rome. And he wrote all of his known works—thirty volumes survive intact—there (*Life* 422–429). From this perspective, he was not merely *a* Roman historian but the most prolific first-century Roman author whose work has endured. The mere fact that he was personally known to the imperial father and son would have meant that he had a better social position than the vast majority of Romans.

In this connection, Josephus claims something that would have been hazardous to lie about: that Titus, after he had dispatched 700 Judean captives from Alexandria to Rome for display in the triumph (*War* 7.118), invited Josephus to travel as his own shipmate (*Life* 422). Once we remember that the ship in question was not a modern floating hotel, with Titus in VIP class and Josephus bunked in the engine room, we can imagine the honor felt by Josephus from a prolonged stay in the great man’s presence. No wonder he recalls it with delight. In a passage that does not mention his presence, he remarks on the pleasantness of the crossing and the exuberant welcome that greeted Titus in port (*War* 7.119). Did he assume his audience’s knowledge of his life story (cf. 1.22), without needing to yell: “I was there!”?

We do not know what role Josephus played in the triumph that soon followed (June 71 C.E.), which was of fundamental importance to the new regime (Millar 2005). But since he describes it with a vividness that makes the passage uniquely valuable for the study of triumphs (*War* 7.123–157), we should conclude that he was present. If so, it seems unimaginable that such an omen-producer for the regime could have been left in the cheap seats and not exhibited in some way—even if in a role that he hoped people would forget. This beginning to his life in Rome, by itself, would have made Josephus a conspicuous foreigner, even if he functioned only as a human mascot for the regime. No one seems to doubt that he had sufficient access to Vespasian and Titus that he could personally present them with copies of his finished *Judean War* (*Life* 361–363; *Apion* 1.50–51).

He may have had closer connections yet with Judea's power couple in the 70s, Agrippa II and Berenice. They spent as much time as they could in Rome. Although *Judean War* artfully keeps his activities hidden until he bursts on the scene as the Jerusalem leaders' choice for the crucial defence of Galilee (2.568), his earlier narration—like that of the triumph at the end—assumes his presence in his mother-city Jerusalem. Given the small size of the city and its elite, he would surely have known the royal brother and sister already in those days. Agrippa and Berenice returned to Rome four years after Josephus arrived: she to reassume her position as Titus's lover and a figure to be reckoned with for as long as the relationship lasted; her loyal brother to receive the high honor of a Roman praetor's *ornamenta* (Cassius Dio 65/66.15; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2; Suetonius, *Tit.* 7.2; Crook 1951). This much is enough to invite further probing.

Reasons for imagining Josephus as an *isolado* in Rome boil down to the observation that he did not leave much of an impression on surviving literary or material remains, for example, in what can be reconstructed of elite prosopography (Cotton and Eck 2005). Some scholars find no evidence that he was socially active in Rome's literary salons (Price 2005). The only extant historians of the Flavian period do name Josephus, as it happens, both citing his prediction (in Galilee) of Vespasian's accession as a major omen (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.6; Cassius Dio in epitome, 65/66.1.4), and it is possible that Tacitus used his *Judean War* in some similar passages of the *Historiae* a generation later (5.1, 13). Eusebius claims that he was "the most famous Judaeon" in Rome, and honored by a statue (*Hist. eccl.* 3.9.2), though this may be doubted on its merits—coming two centuries after Josephus's death, from an author who needs to rely on Josephus's testimony. None of this testimony establishes Josephus as a player in Rome, it is true, and the modest benefits that he claims to have received from the Flavians (*Life* 422–429) confirm that he was not among their top advisors (Mason 1998).

This chapter attempts two things. First, I offer reasons for supposing that Josephus was engaged with his Roman environment in ways that were normal

for writers of that time and place. Second, I highlight what seem to be Roman features of both his historiographical perspective and his treatment of imperial themes. Taken together, this all confirms that he had a Roman public in the first instance, without precluding his writing for posterity and unknowable others, and certainly without displacing his self-conscious role as Judea's elite spokesman.

5.2 Location and First Audiences

Looking for evidence of Josephus's involvement with his environment, given that he would not have spelled out what was obvious at the time, will only be productive if we know what to look for. To gain some perspective, we begin with the mechanics of book production in the early empire. This is not a matter of seeking ironclad rules, but a good deal of research—much of it happily focused on Rome at the end of the first century because of the valuable material in the Flavian poets, the Younger Pliny, and Tacitus—has generated a picture of common practices (van Groningen 1963; White 1975, 1978; Ogilvie 1980, 12–14; Saller 1983; Starr 1987; Harris 1989, 222–229; Salles and Martin 1992; Fantham 1996; Marincola 1997, 19–33; Potter 1999, 23–44; Pelling 2000, 1–17; Nauta 2002, 328–335; 2004, 87–119; Johnson 2010).

To understand the *general* picture produced by this research—there are disagreements on various points, and poetry is different from history—we need to jettison assumptions about modern publication, which are only possible because of technological developments and socio-economic conditions since the printing press and the industrial and digital revolutions. As soon as I finish writing this chapter I shall dispatch it electronically to my editors, who live in different countries from each other and from me. In due course they will send the book to the publishers in New Jersey. Until that point it will not have reached the public that any of us writers envisions: it will not have been published or 'made public' in the modern sense. To reach our intended audiences, a tiny fraction of the world's seven billion persons, we rely on publishers whose reason for being is to match authors and audiences to mutual benefit. Until they receive a book that is ready for printing, they cannot undertake that effort for us. That interdependence explains why publishers become exasperated by delinquent authors, and why we fume if we arrive at our major annual conference and our book has not made it to their book stall. We rely on their marketing for us to find our target readers. The publisher's handling of our work, from refereeing procedures to editing, proofreading, and page layout, gives it the credibility that our public

requires. Anyone who leased a private bookstall to promote their own work would not be taken seriously, no matter how good their ideas might be.

Since publishing is so closely connected in our minds with these procedures, it is best to avoid the term when speaking of ancient Rome. Innocent of the technologies that have made our practices possible, the ancient evidence paints a completely different picture—though a perfectly understandable one in a world that knew nothing of printing, mass copying, or global marketing. Bringing out a book, which is to say an unwieldy set of papyrus or parchment rolls painstakingly handwritten, was inevitably a local and social affair: “The book aborning generated a considerable society of its own” (White 1975, 299; cf. 1978, 85). Even Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius had written for specific moments and audiences in the first instance. In later Rome, both Greek and Latin literature was regularly being produced and made public. How did an author meet his public?

In keeping with the rhetorical values in which everyone was educated, ancient literature was composed to be heard in some way, also to assist visualization by creating word pictures (Chapman 1998). Authors would typically recite their work before audiences, first among small groups of friends and then possibly larger groups; or they might give significant friends partial drafts (each one hand-copied) to be read—aloud, by a slave perhaps (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 7.17). It is unlikely that many men in public life spent their time poring over long rolls of text written by others—in continuous script without punctuation—and reading in silence, as we read much more convenient books. Peter Wiseman puts it succinctly, in speaking of Julius Caesar’s publication of his *Galic War* in the 50s B.C.E. (see further below): “Publication [i.e., reaching one’s crucial public] was the public performance; the written text was for ‘consultation by the educated’” (Wiseman 1998, 5, quoting from Lucian, *Apol.* 3).

The social nature of book production explains why ancient authors’ claims to “truth” referred in the first instance to lack of partisanship, secondarily at best to any concern with what we would consider a rigorous investigation of events. The most salient kind of truth came into view when an author bravely refused to show fear or favor in the circles of living persons connected with his work—not out of sight hundreds of miles away (Woodman 1988, 70–116; cf. Sallust below; Josephus, *War* 1.1–12). A couple of generations after Josephus, Lucian advised historians: “Keep your gaze not on *those who are hearing you now*, but on those who will encounter your work in later times” (*Hist. conscr.* 40). This was the acid test of truthfulness: that the historian avoid pandering to his immediate audiences and write a work that would stand the test of time by dealing with issues of interest to serious men (they were virtually all men) across the generations. But this criterion assumed that the immediate audience was unavoidable, and of course the writer had first to communicate with them. The secret was not to write for them only—an

ephemeral work without staying power (cf. Lucian, *Apol.* 3).

Pliny relates how some unnamed historian abandoned a schedule of planned performances because the friends of “a certain person” had been disturbed by his first outing. Horrified by the exposure of their friend’s actions, in which they felt implicated, they succeeded in stopping the series (*Ep.* 9.27). We have no idea whether this intriguing work ever found a public. But the episode illustrates how difficult it was in reality to make nostrums about speaking fearless truth—a problem familiar to grown-ups of any community, including academia—real in practice.

With our short attention spans we might doubt that long and complex histories could be recited, but evidently they were, in a series of readings such as Pliny mentions. Lucian reports a number of occasions on which he, while traveling through Greek cities, entered a hall to hear someone present a new history. Often enough our grumpy critic showed his disdain by walking out (*Hist. conscr.* 5–6, 14–15, 19, 23, 24, 29). His descriptions evoke both the popularity of historical performances in various *poleis* and the ever-present risk of criticism by visiting cognoscenti.

Consider Peter Wiseman’s argument about Julius Caesar’s unique method in “publishing” the *Gallic War* two centuries before Lucian. Because of Caesar’s belief in the greatness of his subject (himself), Wiseman proposes, he engaged in mass public recitations, breaking out of the “literary” environs in which such presentations normally occurred, to the forum of Rome and other Italian cities. With his enormous wealth, Caesar may even have had copies produced for the provinces, to be read aloud in each *polis* by the man judged by each local council to have the finest voice (1998, 5–7). Whether or not Wiseman is right about Caesar’s methods, his reconstruction highlights the practical constraints on ancient writers. The natural environment for a new book was local and social. In extraordinary cases such as this, the logical solution was to use larger venues to replicate that unavoidably local scenario on a larger scale, in other cities.

Since each copy of a book was handwritten, there was no equivalent of our “going to press.” It was up to the author how long he wished to continue presenting his work to his targeted public. Naturally, some books created such a “buzz” that copies of them, including those by students recording their teachers’ words, found their way into the modest bookseller trade. This trade is best attested in Rome itself, however, where residents of the capital could secure copies of a hot property by having slaves copy it. In this sense, the book trade itself was part of the social and local system of book production (Starr 1987, 221). We should not imagine stockpiled copies of the multi-scroll works being trucked around to provincial warehouses. Pliny expresses or affects surprise that his works are even being read in Lugdunum (Lyons), where he had not imagined there was a bookseller, though that capital of the three Gauls was not terribly far from Rome. Anyway, he is pleased to learn

from a friend (note the social connection) that his compositions are making the same impression there as they had when he had presented them to his own public in Rome (*Ep.* 9.11).

The second-century physician Galen says that he intended his Roman works exclusively for students and not for a wider public. He too is surprised to find them being copied and distributed. Because he has no control over such dissemination outside his circle, he worries about forgeries going out under his good name. In the absence of a publishing industry or copyright, the multiplication of texts was driven solely by the interest of potential readers; it had nothing to do with the author's initiative or wishes (*De ord. libr.* 19.49–50 [Kühn]; van Groningen 1963, 1–3). If a later copyist or forger used the screen of a famous author's name to attack powerful persons, the consequences could be dire. The named writer needed friends to vouch for his innocence (cf. Martial 7.72.12–16; Saller 1983, 247).

For an author to recite or share drafts of his work, obviously it had to have achieved a degree of completion, though he could still adjust and rewrite as he chose. When he had truly finished with it and had no desire to change it further, he could either leave matters there (as Galen preferred) or have some copies prepared as gifts for friends or patrons, for wider circulation. He might deposit one with a library or bookseller, though there was no guarantee that it would remain authoritative, since copies of other exemplars were made *ad hoc*.

This is where we need to be especially careful with terminology, for this “handing over” (*ekdosis*, *edere*, *emittere*) or “making public” (*dêmosioô*, *publicare*) had a very different meaning from our “publishing,” in spite of the literal similarity. The Preface and opening paragraphs of a work on oratory by Josephus's Roman contemporary Quintilian invite us to excavate the stages. First, Quintilian taught rhetoric for more than twenty years. Like Galen, he discovered that unauthorized copies of his lessons, made by students, had gone into circulation (*Inst.* pr. 7). Partly for that reason, but also because some friends asked him, and especially because in retirement from teaching he wanted to offer his friend Marcellus a manual for his young son, he decided to write his own version for his social circle (*Inst.* pr. 1, 6). When he had done this, however, another friend begged him to give the work over (*emittere*) for wider copying, because of the great interest in it. Quintilian agreed reluctantly, explaining that he had only had it in his possession for a couple of years, and had hoped to keep it longer before letting it out into the world. He worried about the changes it would suffer when it fell “into the hands of people generally” (*Ep. ad Tryph.* 3: *in manus hominum*; for the phrase cf. Cicero, *De orat.* 1.94 [on a book that slipped out of his control]; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.17.15).

For us, by contrast, publishing is the moment when *we begin* to meet our intended public. We write a book precisely to get it past that threshold.

Academics may test a chapter or two along the way, but that is discretionary and not the main event. For ancient authors, by contrast, the final “making public” was feared by some, at least not necessarily desired, since they had already reached the public *they* cared about, with versions and interpretations that *they* controlled (van Groningen 1963, 5). Quintilian invokes the image of putting his book out to sea, raising the sail-canvas to the winds and praying fervently that it would fare well as it left for who-knows-where (*Inst.* pr. 3).

When we interpret an ancient text, we must remember that the writer could not have written to communicate with all readers everywhere, indiscriminately, in some sort of neutral or universal prose. Still today, we all have target audiences in view when we write, and our image of them guides us in deciding on both register and content: what we can assume and what we need to be spelled out. The difference, again, is that whereas we rely on publishers to find our audience for us after we are finished with the book, ancient writers normally found their audiences, unavoidably and organically, in their immediate social circles.

Against this rough background, our question is whether we can find evidence that Josephus produced his works in approximately normal ways, or whether he was atypically isolated in Rome—and so had some unusual means of directing his soon-to-be-famous works only to targeted audiences abroad (to the Judean diaspora and perhaps the homeland itself), or indeed whether he wrote in splendid isolation for purely personal satisfaction. In the case of the *Judean War*, his later self-justifying comments suggest the end of a process that looks approximately normal. That is, he gives or sells a few copies of the finished work to close associates with a stake in the events: the emperors Vespasian and Titus, Roman commanders who had served in the war, and such elite Judeans as the surviving Herodians (*Life* 361–363; *Apion* 1.50–51). Apparently these men were within easy reach, to receive their copies, thus in Rome. He claims that one of the two key recipients, Titus, ordered his *Judean War* to be made available to a wider public (*ta biblia dêmosiôsai prosetaxen*, *Life* 363). This language evidently refers to the kind of shift we have observed, here from Josephus’s controlled, personal dissemination among his personal public (if such there were) to access by others who might have the interest and resources to secure a copy. The substance of Titus’s action may be embodied in Eusebius’s claim that Josephus’s volumes were deemed worthy of inclusion in “the library” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.9.2); perhaps Titus also ordered some number of exemplars for booksellers.

Given that unsurprising *conclusion* to the process, when he was finished with his work and could change it no more, is there evidence of the standard earlier situation: that Josephus also had his own social public, to whom he disseminated his work in partial drafts and oral recitations, in local coteries of some sort? From the side of such coteries themselves, the answer is that we have no clear evidence (above). But this is only to say that Pliny and Tacitus,

a generation later, do not mention him; outside of them, we have little evidence of such groups' meetings in the late first century. Pliny boasts that most men of literary ability in Rome (from the late 90s?) were his friends. But he is a late witness (100 C.E.+) for Josephus's main compositions (before 93 C.E.). At any rate, we cannot even recover the audiences and poetic themes that filled Pliny's own calendar in one busy April (*Ep.* 1.13). Much less do we have access to the many Greek authors in Rome or their literary circles during the 70s and 80s, when Josephus was apparently most active.

Concerning the *Judean War*, Josephus relates that, once he found leisure in Rome and had his material ready, he composed the work with the help of "certain collaborators for the sake of the Greek *phōnē*" (*Apion* 1.50). Although the meaning of *phōnē* ("sound," "voice") can shade toward "language" in Josephus (e.g., *Apion* 1.1, 73), he had other words for language in general (e.g., *dialektos*, *glōssa*). In view of his admitted deficiencies in speaking literary Greek (*War* 1.13–16; *Ant.* 20.263) and the rhetorical need to choose words and phrases for their sound, he may have intended this word to signal his challenges with Greek oral *expression*. However that may be, this passage clearly indicates that he had *some* kind of social group (namely, the *synergoi*) as he wrote the *Judean War*.

We know the name of one collaborator, though not one likely to have helped with Greek pronunciation: King Agrippa II. Josephus claims to have received sixty-two letters from Herod's great-grandson, concerning his *Judean War*, which would suggest a flurry of 120 or more letters in both directions. He claims to provide two samples (*Life* 362–367). Many questions surround these exemplars: Did the king really write so many letters? Was Josephus inflating the count by including letters on other subjects, to enhance royal support for his work? Were some of the unquoted letters longer, and/or less kind? Did Agrippa write the somewhat careless words that Josephus quotes? We might guess that if Josephus had invented the correspondence, he would have had the king write a more fulsome endorsement, which would suggest that these modest examples reflect a real correspondence, but we do not know.

What Josephus offers is intriguing, nevertheless. Both samples are brief, no more than two dozen words each, after the greeting. Both seem hastily, even elliptically composed. Both reflect a stage *during* the composition of the *Judean War* ("I have read through volume X with pleasure; send me the rest also"; "I myself shall inform you of many things"). Both are free of substantive comment, however, beyond a general approval. They thus mark moments in the *social exchange* concerning this work, the second one anticipating their next meeting, when Agrippa would divulge new information. The sheer number of such brief letters flying back and forth would suggest physical proximity, the second assuming either Agrippa's imminent arrival or current accessibility in Rome.

Now, the king himself was surely no *isolado*. Such powerful men were

unavoidably surrounded by hangers-on. Josephus was, or convincingly pretended to be, part of the royal circle. This put him in a tense rivalry with other claimants, as his bitter sniping at Justus of Tiberias over their relative favor with Agrippa, by then deceased, shows (*Life* 355–360). Josephus had known Justus ever since the 60s in Galilee. That he did not mention him in the *Judean War* reminds us how much was going on behind the scenes in that work that is hidden from our view, therefore how futile it is to imagine that whatever ‘the evidence’ does not press upon us could not have happened.

Consider too the case of Tiberius Julius Alexander, who was as highly placed as a foreigner could be. Son of an immensely wealthy Judean in Alexandria, and nephew to Philo, Alexander was on a fast track to equestrian status and the sub-governorship of Judea under Claudius in the mid-40s, a senior military post with Corbulo, and then the prized prefecture of Egypt (highest equestrian post) under Nero. When Vespasian’s unique qualification for supreme power became clear to him during the Roman civil war of 68–69, Alexander took a chance and declared himself and his legions for Vespasian, months before the issue was settled militarily. That move assured his position: first, as commander of all Roman forces in the final phase of the Judean War, under Titus, and then apparently (not certainly) as Titus’s partner as Praetorian Prefect in Rome (Turner 1954). Given the close connections between Alexander and Judea and the Herodians—his brother had been the teenaged Berenice’s first husband (*Ant.* 19.276–277)—this extraordinarily powerful man should at least have been interested in Josephus’s work. That Alexander’s presence in Rome as Praetorian Prefect is less than certain, inferred only from the easiest reading of *P. Hibeh* 215, does not matter much for our purposes. Either way, he illustrates how little we know about most social circles in Flavian Rome, and how many possibilities there were for Josephus to be engaged with those around him.

Most important and least discussed: Josephus’s participation in Roman literary life is clear anyway from *Judean War*’s prologue. There he describes just the sort of give and take among budding historians that we find in Lucian’s later tract on history writing. On the one hand, Josephus disparages the many who *are presently writing up* the recent war, whom he assigns to two groups: those who lack eyewitness knowledge and merely rewrite hearsay in a “sophistical” manner, and those with first-hand knowledge who nevertheless write to flatter powerful Romans and denigrate Judeans (*War* 1.1–8). Even if he exaggerates the number of such literary rivals, for these words to have any sense, he must have known of some other accounts in preparation as he was writing. How? The simplest explanation is that he had either heard them himself or heard about them through members of his social network.

On the other hand, Josephus devotes a significant section of the prologue to ridiculing certain Greek experts who have been criticizing histories of this

recent war—chiefly his, it seems, given the uniqueness he claims for his work and the issue of defective Greek language. The judges themselves, he charges, waste their vaunted eloquence retelling old Greek glories (1.13–16). But again, how could Josephus be aware of such criticism of his *Judean War* as he writes its prologue? Whatever this passage refers to concretely, the mutual knowledge and criticism indicate that he was a full participant in his literary environment. This is put beyond doubt by a comment near the end of the prologue: “I shall not conceal any of my own calamities, since *I am about to speak to those who know* [my life]” (*War* 1.22). Unless we credit him with an extraordinary fantasy life, there is no way to interpret these words that does not involve a local, social context for Josephus’s dissemination of his first major work.

It seems relevant for understanding Josephus’s position in Rome that, in the two brief passages describing his life there, much space is given to serious charges brought against him. *Judean War* 7.442–450 details a scheme by the Roman governor of Libya to implicate the “most wealthy and powerful Judeans” of Cyrene, Alexandria, and Rome itself in the crimes of a Judean assassin (*sicarius*), a weaver whom he had captured (*War* 7.447). Josephus claims, however, that when the governor came to Rome and suborned his prisoner to accuse Josephus, Vespasian not only dismissed the charges but had the Judean accuser burned alive, and severely scolded the governor (*War* 7.450–451). That is remarkable enough given the status of the players: Josephus 1, Roman Ex-Praetor and Proconsul, 0.

The *Life* mentions this incident (424–425) and also others in which Josephus was accused *because of his prominence* (“those who were envious fabricated charges”). These include an episode in which one of Josephus’s trusted slaves, a tutor to his son, brought a charge of treason (*Life* 429; Schwartz 1990, 18). It would be difficult to make sense of either the accusations or the imperial favor shown in response, no matter how much Josephus exaggerates or distorts, on a hypothesis that he lived on the extreme, isolated margins of social life in Flavian Rome. He simply assumes audience knowledge of his notoriety, which is unsurprising if he had accompanied Titus to Rome and featured in the Flavian triumph, the event of the century (one hundred years after Augustus’s).

Although his modest list of benefactions indicates that he was not at the top table of politicians and advisors (but why should he be?), there were many other tables around, of which we know nothing. We know *that* they existed because elite Roman and prominent Greek names from the period turn up with little or no information about their circles and activities, which they must have had. Peter White counts fifty literary friends for Pliny and more than thirty for the poet Martial, with negligible overlap (White 1975). Many or most of these men were politically undistinguished, and left little trace elsewhere. Statius’s literary friends likewise left few tracks. The patron he shared with Josephus’s

eminent contemporary, Quintilian—himself consul under Vespasian and teacher of the imperial family—was Vitorius Marcellus (Statius, *Silv.* 4.4; Quintilian, *Inst.* pr. 6). Although Marcellus would reach the suffect consulship in 105 C.E., he appears to have been a young and minor figure, possibly an equestrian who had recently married into a patrician family, at the time of Statius's and Quintilian's dedications (Mommsen 1878; White 1973).

Or take Epaphroditus. This was a common name among slaves and freedmen, and we hear of several prominent Epaphroditi in the Flavian period, including: several freedmen of the imperial family, Nero's notorious freedman later executed by Domitian, the philosopher Epictetus's former master, a wealthy grammarian, the sponsor of a park, and the subject of a large inscription (Weaver 1994, 475; Cotton and Eck 2005, 49–52). Their connections and possible identifications are uncertain, and we know nothing about their varied social circles, though they did have such circles. As it happens, Josephus's later works are all dedicated to a certain Epaphroditus *and his group*. The prologue to *Judean Antiquities* describes most fully this honoree's involvement in great affairs and reversals of fortune (*Ant.* 1.8–9), also crediting him and his coterie with tirelessly encouraging Josephus to finish his twenty-volume work. Josephus will continue to acknowledge him with gratitude and praise as “the most excellent of men” and “the most honoured” (*Life* 430; *Apion* 1.1; 2.1, 296). This fellow was not nobody, then. But alas there were many somebodies of the same name in Josephus's world. Inconclusive debates about the identity of Josephus's patron should not obscure the undeniable point that, whoever Epaphroditus and his friends were, they did provide a social context for Josephus's literary life in Rome. Josephus was no hermit.

And how are we to imagine this group's motive for staying with Josephus over so many years? Did they hear his name at random and begin hounding him until he produced a twenty-volume history, ready-made for them to read from start to finish? It is much more likely, more realistic in the ancient context, that they knew Josephus long before he completed the *Judean Antiquities* because he was famous as “the Judean historian.” It is possible that they were already part of the public for his *Judean War*, and/or that they were captivated by hearing or reading parts of his *Judean Antiquities* in the early years of its preparation. The great work *is* a great story, after all. They pressed him to persevere and finish it, and he duly thanked them. That it was a literary commonplace to say that one had been drafted to write (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 1.1; Quintilian, *Inst.* pr. 1) takes nothing away from the vivid sense Josephus conveys of a real literary context in Rome.

To summarize thus far: we should steer a course in the ample water between viewing Josephus as a key advisor and close confidante of the Flavians, on the one side, and casting him into outer darkness (agreeing with Schwartz 1990, 210). We take this course not for diplomatic or Aristotelian reasons of

compromise, but because the evidence could hardly be explained otherwise. The easier part is to see what is not there, and to agree with recent scholars that there is no support for an old picture of Josephus as the Flavians' favorite and Minister of Propaganda. Much harder is to remember that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. We find sufficient reason, if we interrogate Josephus's narrative in light of the conditions of ancient book production, to conclude that he was actively engaged, as any historian would have been, in what are, for us now, little-known pockets of Rome's literary life. Clearly he was well known to the ruling family, which is something, and neither the humbler nature of his day-to-day contacts nor their obscurity *to us now* should be surprising.

5.3 Roman Aspects of Josephus's Compositions

Much could be said about the substance of Josephus's *Judean War* as a work written first for certain circles in Rome: about the emphases of the prologue's prospectus (1.17–30) in contrast to what the later narrative actually includes, the contrast between assumed knowledge of Roman realia and the need to explain Judean affairs, and the programmatic comparison between Roman and Judean civil war with their respective tyrants (1.4, esp. 585–663; 7.157). Lacking the space to explore all that (see Mason 2003, 2005a, 2005b), we shall briefly take up his historiography in general and his observations relevant to the Principate.

On the former, we must acknowledge immediately that it is impossible to draw a bright line between Greek and Roman historiography, not least because many historians of Rome (e.g., Polybius, Fabius Pictor, Dionysius, Cassius Dio) wrote in Greek. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon exerted a profound influence on educated Romans. And since there is considerable diversity among even those Greek and Roman historical works that survive in significant part, we must posit still greater variation among the many lost works.

That said, scholars broadly agree that Roman historians introduced new concerns and emphases, which give their works a shared coloring or family resemblance. It was an old tradition that the College of Pontiffs would chronicle significant events in Rome annually, under the names of the year's consuls. When Roman authors began to absorb Greek literary traditions, from the early second century B.C.E., they enlivened this annalistic framework with the potent arsenal of Greek rhetoric (Cicero, *De or.* 3.35–36; Mellor 1999, 10–11), now energized by intense personal competition among aristocrats of the late Republic. Roman history would largely be written by, and serve the interests of, society's most powerful men, as another extension of their claims to glory and moral standing (Wiseman 1985).

Roman interest in the personal character of great men was balanced by a new openness to exploring the ancient past (cf. Livy and Dionysius), something that Thucydides and Polybius had eschewed. Antiquity was not a field for investigation by rigorous critical methods, however. The distant past was delivered ready-made in the works of writers now safely acceptable as authorities (Kraus and Woodman 1997, 1–9). This past generated a fund of moral examples for political life, and Rome’s ancient values (*mos maiorum*) furnished the standard for judging contemporary actions, which were typically seen as entropic, falling off steadily from the virtuous past (Hölkeskamp 1996; Comber 1997; Yardley and Heckel 2001, 6–12; Timpe 2011; cf. Sallust, *Cat.* 5.9–13.5; Livy 1.pref. 6–9). Under the Principate, the Roman taste for history as serial biography was quickly turned to serve the towering dominance of one life: that of the *princeps*. His character, achievements (*res gestae*), and glory became the point of reference for everything (Kraus 2005). We return to this below.

Given limited space, the issue of Roman historiography might best be approached by looking at a specimen. Although it was only one man’s effort in the peculiar environment of the 50s and 40s B.C.E., the values it assumes and the language it employs invite comparison with Josephus more than a century later.

C. Sallustius Crispus (86–ca. 35 B.C.E.), a controversial “new man” in the Senate, turned to history in early retirement from a political life of doubtful moral quality. Of Sallust’s *History of Rome* (78 to 67 B.C.E.) we have only fragments, though enough to make clear his approach (see McGushin 1992, 1994). Although he structures his account by consular years in the old way, after asserting that Rome’s problems arose from failings of human character (1.8) he focuses on the individual characters who moved events forward. Sometimes he allows key players to speak forcefully against each other, so that the audience/reader experiences, as it were, the real person. Speeches by such figures are largely about the character of others. For example, L. Marcius Philippus discounts the speech of fellow-Senator M. Aemilius Lepidus on the ground that the man is “the lowest of all criminals” (1.67.3) and “a bandit with a few goons and cutthroats” (*latro cum calonibus et paucis sicariis*, 1.67.7; cf. Habinek 1998). Indignant that Sulla has accused him of being “fond of sedition” and “a lover of war” (1.48.16), Lepidus replies by labelling Sulla a criminal and a tyrant, and his adherents mere slaves and minions. Another distinguished Senator is a “contemptible female slave, the corruption of all honors” (1.48.7–25 [21]). Note that two centuries later, the Greek physician Galen would complain of his Roman colleagues, with their intensely personal rivalry and greed, that they were “bandits” (Eichholz 1951, 64). Readers of Josephus will certainly be familiar with “bandit leaders,” thugs, and *sicarii*.

Sallust’s two fully surviving works make this fusion of history and intense

personal moralizing even clearer because they work within biographical frameworks. Proposing that writing the history of a people (*res gestae scribere*) is a demanding and honorable pursuit for the soul/mind, and given that his own retired soul is now free of hope, fear, or political partiality, he will write up aspects of the deeds (*res gestae*) of the Roman people that he considers memorable. Anticipating modern historicists, however, he will not try to represent the whole chaotic past. The conspiracy led by the patrician Senator L. Sergius Catilina (64–62 B.C.E.) begs for treatment because of “the [magnitude of the] crime” and “the unprecedented danger” to Rome (*Cat.* 4.4). Compare Josephus’s first prologue (*War* 1.1–8).

Sallust frames this personal story with his authoritative sketch of the protagonist’s *character* (*moribus*, *Cat.* 4.5):

Lucius Catiline, born of a distinguished family, had great powers of mind and body alike—but an evil and perverse nature. Right from his youth, civil wars, murder, plunder, and political strife were pleasant pursuits to him, and after that they consumed his early adulthood. His body could tolerate absence of food, cold, and lack of sleep to an unbelievable degree. But his soul/mind was brazen, crafty, shifty, capable of faking or concealing whatever he liked, greedy for what belonged to others while squandering what was his own, consumed by desire (*animus audax, subdolus, varius, cuius rei lubet simulator ac dissimulator, alieni appetens, sui profusus, ardens in cupiditatibus*); sufficient eloquence but insufficient wisdom. His desolate soul/mind always craved what was immoderate, incredible, and unattainable. After the tyranny of L. Sulla, an extraordinary desire to seize the government possessed him (*hunc ... lubido maxuma invaserat rei publicae capiundae*). The manner in which he should achieve this did not worry him in the slightest, as long as it gave him the rule. His fierce soul/mind was spurred on more and more each day by a lack of resources at home, and by a guilty conscience. (*Cat.* 5.1–7)

Here we find many characteristics of Roman Republican historiography: severe discord among the powerful, vivid rhetoric applied to individual moral assessment, claims to truth based on freedom from partisanship, an effort at balance (admitting the enemy’s virtues), and the welfare of the body politic as the ultimate criterion.

Henry St. John Thackeray (1929, 119–120; cf. Villalba i Varneda 1986, 70–71) long ago observed the striking verbal similarity between this passage and Josephus’s description of his arch-enemy in Galilee, John of Gischala, one of the two men the Flavians had since punished as principal culprits (*War* 2.585–590):

As Josephus was thus administering the affairs of Galilee, there stood up against him a certain schemer of a man from Gischala, a son of Leius, John by name: the slipperiest and craftiest of all those distinguishing themselves

in wretched behaviors during these times; nevertheless, being poor at the beginning, for a long while he faced a lack of means as an impediment to his evil. Though ready to lie, he was formidable at conveying trustworthiness for the things he had lied about, regarding as a virtue his trickery—and the use of this against those dearest to him; a pretender to kindness, and extremely bloodthirsty when there was hope of gain; though having always yearned for great things, nourishing these hopes by his pathetic wrongdoings. He was a solitary bandit, but later he found a crew of brazenness—though small at first, cutting an ever-larger swathe ... He selected those who excelled in condition of body, determination of soul, and expertise in wars.

(trans. adapted from Mason 2008)

In spite of this portrayal, Josephus elsewhere allows that John was a wealthy and prominent figure with close connections among Jerusalem's elite, and a reluctant warrior like himself (*Life* 43–44, 189–192). It is difficult to imagine that Josephus could have written such political invective independently of Sallust's model. Not only in specific diction (schemer, slippery, crafty, brazen) but also in sentence structure and the focus on poverty and its moral implications, the two accounts look similar. Josephus will also claim that John's men behaved as women (4.561–562; 5.565)—like Sulla's cronies, according to Sallust's Lepidus.

Although Thackeray noted another echo of Sallust in Josephus's description of John at *Judean War* 4.85, his focus on parallel words alone led him to attribute the allusion to a clever literary "assistant" (1929, 119–120). In the twenty-first century, this explanation will no longer do. A wide range of tools for studying Josephus's language requires us to estimate his control over his writing differently today, and Thackeray's picture of interventionist "literary assistants" has crumbled in the meantime (Rajak 1983, 233–236). If the *Judean War* as a whole is replete with debts to classical authors (e.g., Villalba i Varneda 1986; Eckstein 1990; Chapman 1998; Mader 2000; Shahar 2004), we should conclude that Josephus was also familiar, directly or otherwise, with Sallust's work. His contemporary Quintilian considered Sallust a model historian (*Inst.* 2.5.19; 4.2.45), and the chilling description of Catiline seems to have been recycled by many: by Livy for Hannibal (21.4.5–9) and by Tacitus for Sejanus (*Ann.* 4.1.3; Ramsey 1984, 69). Why should Josephus not have recycled the same admired gem for the "arch-bandit" of the Judean War, who was notorious in Rome? His admittedly likely inability to compose literary Latin says nothing about his ability, after years spent among Romans, to make sense of someone else's. Or he might have known Greek notes on Sallust.

More important for our discussion than particular items of vocabulary is the set of values and interests shared by Sallust and Josephus. Both are indebted to Thucydides (cf. Seneca, *Contr.* 9.1.13) and yet both focus on individual

characters and motives: in Josephus, the various Hasmoneans and Seleucids, Antipater and Herod, then individuals among Jerusalem's elite (Agrippa II and certain chief priests), himself, and the Judean tyrants against Vespasian and Titus, all strong personalities in the story. His interest in personal character also appears in *Judean War*'s references to soldiers on both sides who distinguished themselves on the battlefield (3.229–330; 6.54–92, 147–148). Josephus exploits the duelling-speech technique of Thucydides and Sallust, both to convey balance and to draw the reader into the conflicts: to re-enact the thoughts and emotions of various characters (e.g., *War* 2.26–37; 4.238–283; *Ant.* 4.12–34). Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* and appended autobiography push farthest the conception of history as serial biography, grounded in the characters of great individuals (including the author's) and appealing to ancient ancestral tradition as the unwavering measuring stick (*Ant.* 1.14, 20). Josephus crowns everything with an admiring study of his own character (*Life* 430).

If we glance elsewhere in the Roman tradition, a comparison suggests itself between Josephus's seven-volume *Judean War* and the original seven volumes of Caesar's *Gallic War* (on the latter: Welch and Powell 1998). Both commanders appear as brave and resourceful, describing their exploits and “generals’ tricks” in the third person. Josephus is familiar with the kind of stratagems compiled by his Roman contemporary, Frontinus, for whom Caesar provided the largest fund of *exempla* after Hannibal. Josephus's portraits of both Titus and himself as generals—especially in their forethought, personal courage, and clemency—may well be influenced by the Caesarean tradition. He dates Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in (63 B.C.E.) to the consulship of Cicero and Marcus Antonius, citing as witness “Titus Livius, the author of the Roman history” (*Ant.* 14.66–68). And the *magnum opus* displays many parallels with both Cicero's *Republic* and *Laws* and Dionysius of Halicarnassus's twenty-volume *Roman Antiquities* (Villalba i Varneda 1986, 69–88; detailed notes in Feldman 2000; cf. Mason 2001). We have no grounds for thinking of Josephus as a Latinist, again, but nor can we imagine that he was barred from the most famous literature in Rome.

A small but intriguing issue is Josephus's use of the Latin term *sicarii*, which he transliterates (rather than translating) into Greek, for a range of concealed-knife assassins. This usage is paralleled in no surviving Greek text before Christian authors began to exploit and cite Josephus—Acts 21:38 *possibly* being the first case. (In the third century, Origen [*C. Cels.* 2.13] uses the term independently, of Samaritans, in relation to Roman law.) But Josephus has the transliterated word fifteen times in *Judean War*, four in *Judean Antiquities*. Without exploring all the problems and possibilities (see Brighton 2009), we may still register our curiosity that Josephus should have favored this Latin shock-word when writing in Greek. Why? One might suppose that he was only using the actual name of a particular Judean militant group, but the

difficult proposition that such a rebel group should have chosen this or any Latin name (were they such keen ironists?) is compounded by the fact that he does not reserve the term for one group (e.g., *War* 2.254–257; 7.437–453).

The simplest solution is that he employed *sicarii* to elicit a fear-response, contributing to the tragic ethos of his narratives, but this would only have its full effect with Latin-aware audiences. The *sicarius* phenomenon had been declared reprehensible in the famed Sullan law against *sicarii* and poisoners of 81 B.C.E. (Justin, *Dig.* 48.8), when a standing court was established to try such murderers (*inter sicarios*). The twenty-seven-year-old Cicero had made his mark by courageously and successfully defending an accused *sicarius*—in fact, a wealthy target of Sulla’s regime—in the first public trial on that charge (*Pro Sex. Roscio Amerino*). The great orator often employs the word *sicarius*, which he glosses as “a brazen man frequently involved in murder” (*Pro Rosc.* 39), sometimes to characterize his elite adversaries (*Verr.* 2.1.9). The long shadow of Cicero and the late Republic (e.g., Suetonius, *Iul.* 72: “low-life and *sicarii*”) naturally suggests that Josephus’s preference for this alarming word had something to do with his Roman environment.

Another feature of Josephus’s historiographical perspective points to an accommodation with his Roman context: his treatment of “the Greeks.” Although he writes in Greek and has deeply absorbed Greek literature, values, and categories, in some programmatic passages he takes a stance toward Greek culture that hovers between pity and contempt. We have seen that *War*’s prologue attacks Greek pedants preoccupied with their faded ancient glories, who have the gall to criticize him for linguistic shortcomings, though he is writing a work of unparalleled importance. This leads him to a summary statement about Greeks in general: they love to talk but care little about historical truth (*War* 1.13–16). In the closing sections of the *Judean Antiquities*, after sniping at Greek cultural domination (1.121; cf. 2.3; 16.160; 18.141; 19.278, 239), he makes a positive virtue of his linguistic deficiencies on the ground that his people value truth and fidelity to ancestral law over fancy talk (20.262–265). Then in *Life* 40, he accuses his rival Justus of being “well trained in the Greek sort of education,” which is to say that he knows how to lie convincingly. And *Against Apion* makes relentless fun of Greek cultural pride (e.g., 1.15–72). When we consider that Josephus was writing in Rome, and that his attacks on Greek pretension highlight their love of rhetoric at the expense of truth, as well as their ignorance of non-sea faring nations (such as Judea and Rome), and that these happened to be familiar sore points in Roman-Greek cultural relations (e.g., Dionysius, *Ant. rom.* 9.5.1; Cicero, *De orat.* 1.102; Pliny, *NH* pr. 24–28; 3.2; Wardman 2002, 110–134), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Josephus bonds his laconic Judean compatriots with the citizens of his adopted home city, over against the prevailing Greek culture (*Apion* 1.60–66 with Barclay 2007 *ad loc.*).

Our final topic, Josephus on the Principate, must be treated briefly. His

narratives reveal from beginning to end the looming presence of imperial power. *Judean War*'s prologue features the labours of the ruling family outside the Jerusalem that Titus reluctantly destroyed (1.4–12), and *Life* closes with Josephus's expressions of gratitude to each Flavian ruler in succession (422–429). Because even the most congenial autocrats had lethal power in their command, the wisest course for those near them was to flatter and dissemble in whatever way the situation required (Cassius Dio 53.19; Bartsch 1994). A few philosophers and others attempted something like honest speech, but this might well lead to exile or even termination with extreme prejudice (Tacitus, *Agr.* 1–3). A third possibility required considerable art: an ironic flattery that masked at least winking sarcasm if not implicit (and vague) criticism (Ahl 1984). Josephus adopted all three modes. The flattery typical of Flavian authors (Martial, *Ep.* 9.1; Valerius Flaccus 1–21) was so closely connected with Josephus in older scholarship that his *Judean War* was thought to be the reworking of an official source (Weber 1921). He undeniably does flatter Vespasian and Titus personally, though this by no means extends to all things Roman. Less obvious by design are the mines he laid beneath the narrative surface, which might explode to the delight of the audience with ears to hear (Mason 2005b). Least noticed of all are Josephus's rather forceful critiques of monarchy and its crucial prerequisite in the first century: hereditary succession.

In this connection I wish to make three points. First, Josephus as both narrator and character-creator is a vocal advocate of aristocracy, who favors collegial 'senatorial' government under ultimate divine authority (*Ant.* 4.186, 218, 220, 222, 255, 324; 5.15, etc.). Only God has the perfection needed to be absolute monarch. Josephus does not present this as merely his own view, but fathers it on Moses (4.223) and the prophet Samuel, skilfully massaging the biblical story (6.36; cf. 6.84, 268; 11.111; 20.229). Although he is speaking of the Judean constitution, the fact that he invites his Roman audience to consider whether this is not the best constitution of all, modelled on the very laws of nature (1.14–25), suggests that he is not speaking parochially.

Second, one of the two problems that Josephus, reflecting a long history of Greek political reflection (cf. Herodotus 3.80.3–4), identifies as fatal to human monarchy is the inevitable descent of kingship into tyranny—the ultimate scare-word of Hellenistic-Roman politics. Cognates of *tyranny* appear 130 times in his narratives. The tyrant prototype is Noah's great-grandson Nimrod, who tries to make the people dependent on him rather than God (*Ant.* 1.114). But *all* kings, Samuel warns, eventually enslave their populations and consider everyone's property their own (*Ant.* 6.40–44). Other tyrants appear along the way, but Saul as first king becomes the prime exhibit: with no curbs on his power, Saul acts with "brazenness, recklessness, and contempt for things human and even divine" (*Ant.* 6.264–268).

Two thirds of the tyranny words in *Judean Antiquities* are reserved for Books

14 through 19, which intertwine the reign of King Herod (e.g., 14.165; 16.1–4, 395–404) and his successors in Judea with Roman politics, especially in the person of Gaius Caligula (*Ant.* 18–19). It is characteristic of Herod, Tiberius, and Gaius alike that they terrorize the nobility in order to seize property (*Ant.* 17.307–308; 18.226; 19.2). Most impressive is the speech that Josephus writes for Cn. Sentius Saturninus, consul in 41 C.E., following the assassination of Gaius (*Ant.* 19.167–184). Roman nobleman and Judean narrator agree that the tyranny from which they have just been delivered did not begin with Gaius; it stretches back to Julius Caesar and *all the regimes since* (*Ant.* 19.172–173, 187). The distinguished Senator also agrees with his script-writer in appealing for a restored aristocracy with collegial senatorial power, as the only viable constitution (*Ant.* 19.178).

This extraordinary treatment of the entire Principate as a tyranny *in principle*, with no exemption even for Augustus, is complemented by Josephus's handling of the other problem with monarchy: succession. Through the examples of Gideon's, Eli's, Samuel's, and John Hyrcanus's sons (*Ant.* 5.234, 338–339; 6.33–36; 13.300–301), *Judean Antiquities* makes the point that heirs rarely match their virtuous fathers. Again on this issue, Josephus blends the story of Herod with that of Rome's rulers to devastating effect. Herod obsesses over his personal succession, changing his will repeatedly and leaving such a mess at his death that his rival heirs (*Ant.* 17.188–189)—unworthy youths grasping after a diadem—must employ orators to make their cases before Augustus and his *consilium* (*Ant.* 17.219–320; cf. *War* 2.14–100).

The space that Josephus devotes to the Herodian succession hearing in Rome, all but displacing any account of Archelaus's actual reign and including the otherwise pointless information that Augustus's ill-fated daughter Julia, son-in-law Agrippa, and grandson (and adopted heir) Gaius were all present (*Ant.* 17.229; *War* 2.25), could not but remind a Roman audience of the model emperor's own progeny woes. Precisely this problem would eventually put the reluctant Tiberius (another husband of Julia) in power. The debacle of Gaius Caligula's tyranny likewise comes about because of Tiberius's succession problem, which leads him into a superstitious blunder and the elevation of the ghastly young fellow. When Tiberius sees what he has done, with tragic irony he can only warn Gaius in futility about the perils of absolute power (*Ant.* 18.205–223).

When we consider that succession had become the glaring defect of the whole Julio-Claudian line, a flaw that poor Galba tried vainly to remedy (Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.15–16), whereas Vespasian's appeal rested largely on his having a proven heir and a spare (*War* 4.596; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.77); that Domitian would turn out to be the bad seed of this lot, as Josephus was writing the *Judean Antiquities*; and that it was common practice to criticize current regimes under the guise of other times and persons, it becomes nearly impossible to believe

that Josephus and his audiences would not have joined the dots to find in his account of Judean and Roman high politics material for a critique of the Principate.

5.4 Conclusion

There is much that we do not know about Flavian Rome and Josephus's place within it. We have no reason to think that he was an advisor or close friend of the ruling family. Still, if we proceed from what can be reconstructed of Roman book production and look for relevant clues in Josephus's works, we find coherent indications that he produced his work in the normal sort of way. Josephus envisaged and had a local public in Rome, and he wrote for them in the first instance. He expected such audiences not only to get past, but to savour, *Judean War's* opening 264-word period (1.1–6). He wrote for those interested in war, and more generally in *polis* leadership, civil strife, tragedy, cultic pollution and purification, political constitutions, ethnography, laws, and moral philosophy. Although we know little about his first audiences, we may be confident that he had a public in Flavian Rome.

Does it make any difference? Confirming Josephus's Roman literary environment in no way detracts, I must stress, from his importance as a *Judean* historian. On the contrary, from the beginning to the end of his *œuvre*, he wrote self-consciously as Judea's spokesman in Rome, and he nowhere flaunts Roman credentials. Even in asserting his moral standing as a nobleman, he turns to the criteria of his own culture: priestly ancestry and education. Especially because no competing accounts have survived, we shall always need Josephus above all for his account of Judean history. But in order to use evidence, historians need first to understand its nature, form and language. When we seek to understand Josephus's work, to use it for Judean history, it matters that he wrote neither some kind of neutral facts in a vacuum nor in free suspension above the Mediterranean. He chose his material and language first of all as a communicative bridge between his Judean values and those of his Greek-educated public in Flavian Rome.

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CHAPTER 6

Josephus and Greek Imperial Literature

Eran Almagor

6.1 Introduction

Traditionally, Josephus has not been considered a figure properly belonging to a study of Greek imperial literature. The reasons are varied, but it would seem that Josephus has been perceived as too foreign in the eyes of scholars who have emphasized the Hellenic character and substance of the cultural activity associated with the so-called Greek “Renaissance,” conceived of as expressing Greek identity and essentially contributing to its appearance and unique course. Most famously, Bowie (1970, 15 and n. 41) has excluded Josephus from the main Greek tradition, focusing on the Jewish author’s professed contrast with contemporary Greek attitudes (cf. *War* 1.13–16), and locating him at best within a historiographic tradition that goes back to Thucydides (e.g., cf. *War* 1.1–2, 30); in a similar vein, Swain (1996) and Schmitz (1997) have hardly discussed Josephus, given their concentration, respectively, either on imperial Hellenism as re-constructed in response to the Roman Empire or on the internal Hellenic tension between the Greek masses and the Greek elite. Another attitude, first espoused by Bowersock (1969), has highlighted the practical rather than the literary importance of the intellectual figures, sophists or men of letters at that period, as mediators between the imperial center and the periphery, and hence has tended to ignore Josephus.

It is only with the latest expressions of the aforementioned two scholarly approaches to Greek imperial literature that Josephus has finally been allowed to assume his rightful place within the context of the interesting trends of his time. Thus, Jones (2005) addresses Josephus’s relation to types of Greek literature that flourished in the Flavian era, as well as his personal contacts with certain known figures; Jones’s conclusion that “the real Josephus’s lack of contact with contemporary authors may be an illusion fostered by Josephus the author” (Jones 2005, 208) is a truism that is hard to prove or refute (the image of Josephus as an isolated figure having been proposed by Cotton and Eck 2005 notwithstanding). A clear appreciation of Josephus as a child of his time is perhaps gained through an examination of the themes and literary techniques his works display compared to instances found in contemporaneous literature. Significant recent studies include: Gleason (2001) on Josephus’s imagery and representations of the body and its objectification; Whitmarsh (2005, 80; 2007) on the contextualization of both Josephus’s

attention to himself in his *Life* and the adaptation of the biblical story of Joseph (*Ant.* 2.7–200) within the framework of autobiographical or apologetic references, on the one hand, and the Greek novel, on the other; the comparison made by Feldman (2005) of Plutarch's Lyscurgus and Josephus's Moses; Mason (2005) on Josephus's use of figured speech and audience-dependent irony; and Chapman (1998) on spectacle in *Judean War* and (2005a) on Josephus and Greek poetry. It is the aim of this chapter to pursue these lines of research and to further examine features found within Josephus's works as part of the cultural trends in the surrounding Greek-speaking world, to which he was without doubt exposed in various degrees.

6.2 Josephus and the Greek Sophists

One of the reasons to exclude Josephus from any treatment of these literary and cultural movements is that his writing has been thought to be more typical of the Hellenistic rather than the imperial kind (Lincoln 2009, 84–85; cf. Cohen 1979, 27), an implied assumption being that the imperial literary developments were yet to crystallize and to be recognized as such. Another reason is the postulation that his Greek was less than adequate to be even considered alongside these brilliant intellectuals. Let us address the last point first. Josephus claims in the *Against Apion* that he was helped by assistants (*synergoi*, 1.50), who helped him “with the Greek tongue,” and by whose aid he composed the history of the events in the *Judean War* in its Greek version. While this statement was taken by Thackeray (1929, 100–124) to be tantamount to an admission that Josephus was wholly dependent on these persons for the content of the entire work, it is more reasonable to assume that the task of the helpers was merely to correct Josephus's language by way of phrases or grammar and the employment of Attic words and style (Schwartz 1990, 36–37; cf. Rajak 1983, 233–236). As to the presence of the allusions to classical historians, orators or tragedies found in Josephus (Thackeray 1927, xv–xix [LCL]; Schwartz 1990, 223–324), the question is still open whether they all ultimately derive from the collaborators. It is important to recall that at the end of the *Judean Antiquities*, Josephus would claim: “I have also labored strenuously to partake of the realm of Greek prose and poetry, after having gained knowledge of Greek grammar, although the habitual use of my native tongue has prevented my attaining precision in the pronunciation” (*Ant.* 20.263, trans. Feldman, LCL). This passage implies that Josephus had studied Greek with sufficient skill between 79 (or 81) and 93–94 C.E. (*Ant.* 20.267; cf. Schwartz 1986; Jones 2002). Leaving aside the possibility of Josephus's later revisions of the *War* and its rhetorical parts (see McLaren 2005, 45), his authorship of the speeches in the *Judean Antiquities* is clear. One may note that Josephus reworked some of the speeches (for instance, Herod's address to

his troops in *Ant.* 15.127–146 is more elaborate than in *War* 1.373–379; see [Chapter 15](#) by Kaden in this volume). He may also have been responsible for the form of the argument and perhaps many of the themes employed in his first composition, *Judean War*, even though he needed help in polishing the Greek (see [Chapters 1, 3, and 5](#) by Mason in this volume). Josephus's training in that language (possible early training: Hezser 2001, 90–94) surely included practice in rhetorical exercises (see Wolff 1908). As Runnalls (1997, 743–746) points out, Josephus explicitly refers in his works to the two main types of Greco-Roman oratory, namely, the deliberative (symbolleutic: *War* 6.107; cf. 2.345, 5.419, 7.342) and the forensic (dikanic: *Ant.* 16.29; cf. 17.118). His familiarity with the types of oratory entails that some of the commonplaces employed in the schools of his time were also not alien to him (cf. also Villalba i Varneda 1986, 92–105).

Indeed, if Josephus was to witness the unique cultural phenomenon of the Greek-speaking sections of the Roman Empire, centered around performances of oratorical declamations for educated elites, he was certainly not able to see it at its acme, roughly beginning in the Hadrianic period (117–138 C.E.). Yet, it would obviously be wrong to assume that Josephus was not aware of this trend at all or that he did not take note of its growing appeal. The phenomenon is termed by the Greek author Philostratus, writing with hindsight in the mid-third century C.E. (*VS* 511–12), as the “second” sophistic, and is characterized by the practice of an epideictic oratory, that is, oratory delivered for the occasion and one that is meant to entertain. It is not an oratory intended to serve practical means of persuasion in the legal (the forensic variant of oratory) or political (the deliberative) cases or situations. While the “first” sophistic is dated by Philostratus to the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. and is defined by its dealing with philosophical precepts (cf. *VS* 480–1, 507), the “second” is placed by him much later (though originating with the fourth-century B.C.E. orator Aeschines), commencing, in Philostratus's scheme, with the orator Nicetes of Smyrna, in the reign of Nero (54–68 C.E.). The next practitioner Philostratus mentions is Scopelian of Smyrna (*VS* 519), who is said to have made such a luminous impression in Domitian's Rome that he attracted many youths in his train by his performance. Evidence of the imprint made by these figures on contemporaries is a depiction of Nicetes' fame given by the Roman author Tacitus (*Dial.* 15.3).

It would therefore not be far-fetched to claim that this sort of oratory was not an obscure trend in Josephus's time. Despite Philostratus's account, which does its utmost to emphasize the imperial character of the “sophistic” phenomenon (excepting three insignificant interim figures, *VS* 510), there were certainly other and earlier practitioners of this type of epideictic rhetoric, as can be gleaned from Cicero (*Orator* 37–39, 65; *Brut.* 315; cf. *De legibus* 1.5). In the oratorical schools, exercises included what was known under the Latin terms *suasoriae* (fictitious political speeches) or *controversiae* (fictitious

legal orations). Both variants of exercises were grouped under the heading of *meletai* (declamations) in the Greek-speaking world, and it was in their public format, namely, as performed in front of large audiences, that they were soon perceived as part of a new cultural surge and as a medium for the negotiation of Greek identity; these improvised speeches were given in the person of (and sometimes supposedly addressed to) an historic or a mythic figure (Russell 1983, 1–20; Anderson 1993, 55–68; Swain 1996, 90–96). In some of the depictions we have, the sophists’ performances were proclaimed to be so popular that even non-Greek speakers would be attracted to attend and hear them (the case in VS 488 is of interest since it is an account of Josephus’s rough contemporary, Dio of Prusa, which might allude to attendance of partial outsiders, similar to Josephus; cf. Favorinus, who fascinates non-Greek-speakers with his orations, VS 491).

Now, the term “sophist” is a notoriously slippery one (see Brunt 1994, 26–33, 47–50; Swain 1996, 97–180; Whitmarsh 2001, 41–45), purportedly a sage or *savant*, denoting a teacher of rhetoric yet also an epideictic orator, albeit often used in a pejorative sense as a fraud (from Isocrates and Plato onward).

Indeed, Josephus’s use of the term betrays a number of these senses. At the very opening of the *Judean War*, he claims to have written his own version in Greek (the first one was in Aramaic: *War* 1.3, 1.6; see [Chapter 1](#) by Mason in this volume) in opposition to those authors who did not participate in the war, and composed their narratives from hearsay in “a *sophistic manner*”

(*sophistikōs*). Indeed, this ostensibly derided mode of delivery, dwelling on the fictitious with its recognized stress on rhetoric declamation, was therefore not only known to Josephus, but may be said to have provided the backdrop that prompted him to adduce his own account in Greek in the first place. It would seem that in order to compete with the attractiveness of these versions (none of which is known to us; cf. *War* 1.7–9), and to persuade his readers of the truth of his own account (blaming the radical rebels), Josephus had to adopt some of the common literary techniques of his time (cf. *Ant.* 14.1–3), the lengthy speeches assigned to certain leading protagonists being the most conspicuous device; it is employed eight times in the *Judean War* (deliberative: 2.346–401; 3.362–382; 4.163–192; 4.238–269; 5.376–419; 6.99–110; 7.323–388; forensic: 6.323–350). Some of the arguments and themes used by Josephus must be seen, therefore, in the context of Greek sophistic *meletai*, even by way of challenging their usual significance.

6.3 Josephus and Greek Contemporaries on the Past and the Roman Present

It is certainly no coincidence that in the first major speech in the *Judean War* (2.346–401), given by Agrippa, Josephus uses habitual examples from

Athenian and Classical history (see Mason 2008, 265–311). Three generations later, Lucian would mock these examples in his *A Professor of Public Speaking*, a parody of the extemporizing sophist:

Cap everything with references to Marathon and Cynegirus, without which you cannot succeed at all. Undeniably let Athos be crossed in ships and the Hellespont afoot; let the sun be shadowed by the arrows of the Medes, and Xerxes flee the field and Leonidas receive admiration; let the inscription of Othryades be deciphered, and let allusions to Salamis, Artemisium, and Plataea come thick and fast.

(*Rhet. praec.* 18, trans. Harmon, LCL)

Whether relevant or not to the argument at hand or the *persona* of the speaker, these stock historical examples are caricatured by Lucian as a necessary component of any successful speech. We learn from the advice Plutarch gives to a local statesman in *Precepts of Statecraft* that these same examples might have volatile political potential in stirring up the Greek masses, unless treated in the proper framework. Plutarch advocates statesmen refraining from any mention of past glories:

[Y]ou should ... not have great pride or confidence in your crown, since you see the boots of Roman soldiers just above your head ... indeed there are many acts of the Greeks of former times by recounting which the statesman can mould and correct the characters of our contemporaries ... but Marathon, the Eurymedon, Plataea, and all the other examples which make the common folk vainly to swell with and kick up their heels, should be left to the schools of the sophists ...

(*Mor. [Praec.]* 814B–C, trans. Fowler, LCL)

Plutarch would rather have the sophists deal with this explosive material, presumably since their performances are construed as detached from any political import (cf. Jones, 1971 113–114; Spawforth 1994, 245–246; Whitmarsh 2005, 66–67). It is to Josephus's credit that he uses these same potentially subversive examples not in a context that incites people to action, but rather aims to dissuade the audience from any act intended against the Romans. If this interpretation is correct, and the passage was not composed by the historian's assistants but rather by Josephus (while admittedly perhaps not shaped or polished entirely by him) in response to public declamations of the sort Lucian and Plutarch refer to, then we can securely see here an example of his awareness of a cultural trend and his attempt to produce a sophisticated variant of it. In Agrippa's mouth, the picture is reversed:

Look at the Athenians, the men who, to maintain the liberty of Greece, once consigned their city to the flames; the men before whose pursuit the haughty Xerxes, who navigated the land and trod the sea, Xerxes for whom the deep was too narrow and whose army overflowed Europe, fled like a

fugitive slave on a single galley; the men who, off the coast of little Salamis, broke the immense might of Asia. Those men today are the servants of the Romans and the city that was the queen of Greece is governed by orders from Italy. Look at the Lacedaimonians: after Thermopylae and Plataea, after Agesilaus the explorer of Asia, they are content to serve the same masters.

(*War* 2.358–359, trans. Thackeray, LCL)

As Lucian recommended, Xerxes' escape is brought in, Thermopylae is mentioned as well, and Agrippa certainly cannot do without Plataea. But here the victories of the Greeks or their military and courageous feats are ingeniously advanced to argue for Jewish acquiescence. In order for this reversal to make its full literary impact, we must assume that both author and intended readership were familiar with the customary use of these examples (and their repeated combination) in the schools and in public orations, as referred to by Plutarch. The use of Agesilaus's *exemplum* is also attested as a popular topic for declamations (Aelius Aristides, *Rom. or.* 17; Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 2.389). There is even a way in which Josephus may be seen to expand a known theme, rather than undermine it, for in terms of style, phrases, and examples used, Agrippa's call to submit to Rome is reminiscent of the arguments advanced in Aeschines' *Against Ctesiphon* for collaborating with Macedonia (e.g., *War* 2.358 and *In Ctes.* 134 on "hegemony of Greece/Greeks"; *War* 2.380 and *In Ctes.* 132 on the sun metaphor for imperial greatness). In his comparison of the deeds of Xerxes and the miserable plight of Darius III, the Athenian orator included an example that future sophists and Josephus will follow, namely, the Athos/Hellespont pair, a beloved theme as we have noticed (cf. also Dio, *Or.* 3.29–34; cf. also Juvenal, 10.174–188). The fact that *Against Ctesiphon* was known at some level to Josephus can be observed in the interesting allusion in the *Judean War* to one detail deriving from it (the fact that Greeks sever the right hands of suicides: *War* 3.378; *In Ctes.* 244). Alongside Demosthenes, Aeschines supplied many topics for declamation (Kohl 1915, nos. 203–328; Russell 1983, 11, 12, 35, 44, 118, 120; cf. Lucian *Rhet. praec.* 10), and Josephus used him as some sort of model for a set piece advocating compliance with the ruling foreign power—not the Macedonians this time, but the Romans.

The last speech in the *Judean War* (7.323–388) is composed of two self-contained parts delivered by Eleazar ben Ya'ir at Masada, encouraging the last defenders to commit suicide rather than surrender to the Romans (see Weiss-Rosmarin 1977; Cohen 1982; Ladouceur 1987). Voluntary death was not a classic rhetorical theme, but rather one developed by the Stoics (cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 58, 77; Diog. Laert. 7.130; Runnalls 1997, 744) and found in imperial times (Russell 1983, 22, 35; cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 4.476–530). Even though the defenders did not fight to the last man but rather committed

suicide, it would seem that as part of the heroic picture Josephus was aiming to construct (cf. Strobel, 1958), a possible context to Eleazar's fictitious speech would be the celebrated declamation of Leonidas and the Spartans confronting the Persians at Thermopylae (on this theme, see Seneca the Elder, *Suasoriae* 2; Menander Rhetor, *Epideictic Speeches* 1.364, 365; Spawforth 2012, 88–89, 125–126). At another point (*Apion* 2.226–228), Josephus explicitly compares Jews and Spartans concerning adherence to the laws (van Henten 2007, 210–211). Doubtless, the choice Eleazar and his companions faced is different, namely, whether they give in to the Romans or kill themselves and their families. Josephus does not present a clear picture on this issue of suicide and this complexity should be remembered: while the last speech is meant to advocate it, that of the author himself to the survivors of the siege of Jotapata (*War* 3.362–382) is designed to deter them from killing themselves (cf. also *War* 4.79–80 and 4.312; Runnalls 1971, 214).

It would appear that in both cases of Thermopylae and Masada, death is said not to be feared (Seneca, *Suas.* 2.2; *War* 7.342–350). Josephus is more consistent in dealing with the immortality of the soul, whereas Seneca merely cites the view that god has fashioned us of weak material (*imbecilla materia*). Seneca's stress on the unaltered character of the Spartans (*Suas.* 2.3) is matched only by Josephus's emphasis on God's change of mind to side with the Romans after the Jews have not used their lives properly (*War* 7.358–360). Thus, while the Spartans usually need no walls to protect them (*Suas.* 2.1, 3, 5, 16: *sine muris vivimus*; cf. Philostratus, *VS* 514), Eleazar points out that the fire that the wind had blown against the Roman siege turned against the defenders' wooden wall (*War* 7.332). It might even be the case that Eleazar's speech is not free from tinges of tongue-in-cheek rhetoric, if we assume that Thermopylae imagery indeed lurks at its background. First, the brave Spartan opposition to the Persians and their army has overtones of the east–west conflict (*Suas.* 2.1, 2.7), but the belief system that is used as an example to motivate Eleazar's audience and eventually prevails is that of the oriental Indians (7.351–357; for its supposed source, see Morel 1926; Luz 1983; perhaps also an ironic intimation of some view associating Jews and Indians: *Apion* 1.179). Second, the Great King does his best to change nature but is confronted by the Spartans' unshakeable character (*Suas.* 2.3), while Eleazar and his companions realize a greater force is at work, who controls their fates and sides with their enemy.

Two attitudes towards Rome can be discerned in this passage: an overt and straightforward approach alongside one that is subtly concealed. Their juxtaposition is contradictory, but this is not accidental, as it largely conforms to similar conflicting trends in Greek imperial literature and outlook. The first is related to the statement that God has gone over to the Roman side. The second has to do with Persian connotations. Returning once more to Agrippa's speech, the idea of divine sanction is formulated in this way: “without God's

aid, so vast an empire could never have been built up” (*War* 2.390). In Josephus’s own speech (*War* 5.412), he goes on to say that God, the creator (*War* 5.377), has left the holy places and is taking his stand with the Romans; Titus exclaims upon his entry to Jerusalem (*War* 6.411): “God indeed has been with us in the war. God it was who brought down the Jews from these strongholds; for what power have human hands or engines against these towers?” The only conclusion, which Josephus himself adopts and which he commends, is submission to the Romans (*War* 3.136). These passages and others do not necessarily convey a picture of Josephus as a sheer lackey of Roman power or a propagandist of the Flavian dynasty (see Laqueur 1920; Thackeray 1929, 27, 42; Cohen 1979; Beard 2003; Barclay 2005). His relationship with Rome should be viewed as more complex, not enthusiastically supporting the imperial rule, but rather accepting the harsh reality of Rome (see Rajak 1983, 174–184; 1998; 2001a, 147–158; Bilde 1988; Chapman 1998, 122–193; Mason 2001; Schwartz 2002; McLaren 2005). Only then can we see, first, the extent of Josephus’s accord with current Greek depictions of Rome and, second, his own contribution in providing implicit insinuations. His is a sophisticated position, in the manner of his contemporaries. Indeed, that the Roman Empire was helped, or indeed created, by God or divine assistance was a common theme in Greek declamations (Plut., *De fort. Rom.* 316F; Aelius Aristides, *Rom. or.* 29). Particularly popular was the rhetorical commonplace that Fortune (*Tychê*), not in the sense of a capricious force, but rather as divine will or providence, favors the Romans (*War* 2.373, 4.622; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.46).

Among contemporary Greek declaimers and authors, Josephus included, there are signs of conformity to the imperial attempt to draw parallels between the Greco-Persian Wars and Roman operations in the east, by way of constituting a shared past and a common cultural heritage between Greeks and Romans (Seager 1980; Rosivach 1984, 2–3; Spawforth 1994, 237–243; Hardie 1997). This trend reached its peak with the campaigns of Trajan (114–117 C.E.) and Verus (162–166 C.E.) and inspired Greek authors like Arrian in both his *Parthica* (*FGrH* 156 F 30–53) and *Alexander’s Anabasis*, or the anonymous writer on Verus’s expedition (*FGrH* 203). There are echoes of Greek action against “Asia” in Plutarch’s *Roman Lives* (*Comp. Crass-Nic.* 4.4; *Ant.* 45.12; Almagor forthcoming). One result of this tendency was to depict Arsacid Parthia by several motifs and themes used to describe the Achaemenid kingdom, i.e., as a decadent oriental court (cf. Seneca, *De constant.* 13.4; Martial, 10.72.5–7; Justin, 41.3.9). Although better informed (cf. Rajak 2001a, 278, 289, 295), Josephus in his depictions of the Parthians also embraces allusions to Persian practices and motifs (*Ant.* 18.328; 20.68; Rajak 2001a, 285 n. 25, 296).

On another level, however, the relevance of the Greco-Persian Wars to the contemporary political situation was quite different. In descriptions of Roman

imperial institutions, Greek authors and declaimers frequently employed terminology used by classical authors to portray the Achaemenid kingdom, such as “satraps” or “Great King” (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 7.66, 7.93, 33.14, 47.9, 50.6; Philostratus *VS* 524; Bowie 1970, 33 n. 95; Mason 1970, 157; Swain 1996, 176, 321; Whitmarsh 2005, 66–67). Apart from the obvious archaism, the language betrays a memory of the times when the Greeks were confronting a dominant non-Hellenic political system. It may also imply Rome’s eventual demise, an end that would resemble that of the Achaemenid Kingdom. Such a subversive message could not of course be pronounced openly (cf. Philostratus, *VS* 560–561) and hence the employment of what is termed as “figured speech,” namely, the devices of allegory, irony, and innuendo, was meant to conceal this meaning (cf. Mason 2005; Whitmarsh 2005, 63–65). Josephus even uses silence in his interpretation of Daniel’s predictions, presumably to conceal an understanding of the fourth kingdom (Dan 2:34–35) as Rome (*Ant.* 10.213; see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). Thus, Josephus was probably also of the opinion that Rome’s rule would end (see Mason 1994; Bilde 1998; Spilbury 2003; Gruen 2011, 159–160; at *War* 4.629, Josephus’s ability to predict the future is declared), though never calling for any human action to bring this about. In his own variation of the “Rome as the New Persia” theme, there is a sense of closure between Persia and Rome, or between Cyrus and Vespasian (or Titus) in the construction and destruction of the temple (*War* 6.270). It would appear that both Cyrus (*Ant.* 11.3, 110) and Titus (*War* 5.19) are instruments of God’s will (*War* 6.110). Read in this way, the declaration Josephus attributes to himself while ostensibly supporting Roman rule could be seen as seditious: “Fortune, indeed, had from all quarters passed over to them, God who went the round of the nations, bringing to each in turn the rod of empire, now rested over Italy” (*War* 5.367; trans. Thackeray, LCL). But who will be the next political power? Some Greeks, whom Livy derisively calls *levissimi* (“light-headed”: 9.18.6) have cast their eyes and hopes on the east, namely, Parthia (cf. Justin, 41.1.7); Josephus (*War* 2.388) attests that some Jews shared these aspirations with regard to eastern Jews (if not the Parthian king). It is hard to tell, but it would seem possible that Josephus’s innuendos indicate that he was also of this view (cf. *Ant.* 11.133). We can see the irony of *Judean War* 2.362: “their [forces] have never met with a reverse throughout the *oikoumene*”; if the latter is taken to mean Roman-controlled territories, as in 2.388, then it is true—but not so east of the Euphrates. One may ask with the depiction of the Persian-sponsored inauguration of the temple (*Ant.* 11.80–83): Will it be rebuilt again with the help of an eastern power, successor to the Persians?

One would imagine that the great extent of the Roman Empire (delineated in Agrippa’s speech, *War* 2.363–388; cf. Gabba 1976/7) would indicate unrestricted temporal existence as well. The idea actually appears in the work of the Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus, praising imperial government at the beginning of his *Roman Antiquities* (1.2.1). The four Empires of

Assyria, Media, Persia, and Macedonia, he claims, held power for short periods of time and were limited in scope, while Rome rules every country that is not inaccessible or uninhabited and controls every sea (1.3.3). Dionysius concludes that Rome's sway is over every region of the world, and there is "no nation that disputes her universal dominion or resents her rule" (1.3.5). Now, oratory permeates Dionysius's work (Usher 1982, 819) through its aims to persuade the readers that the founders of Rome were Greeks (1.5.1–2), to praise Roman rule (1.2.1–2), and to encourage the readers to adopt an honorable life (1.6.4). This feature places Dionysius wholly within the Greek imperial world of rhetorical performances and constructions, which presumably served as a background and context to Josephus's writings (see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz on *Jewish Antiquities* in this volume). Ostensibly, Josephus appears to follow Dionysius's sentiments here, but on closer inspection his position appears not to be a simple panegyric on the Empire. In their demeanor, the Romans are *said* by Josephus to be unlike the Assyrians (*War* 5.404–408). The latter's rule was indeed temporary and short, God being unfavorable because of Sennacherib's treacherous deeds. The justice and moderation of the Romans, epitomized by the word "*philanthrôpia*" (*War* 6.333–335; Runnalls 1971, 330–341; cf. Berthelot 1999, 102–103) were another theme of Greek sycophantic declaimers, as seen in Aelius Aristides' *Roman Oration* (66, 97–98). Yet, the Romans' conduct is *shown* by Josephus to have features of bad faith and cruelty (e.g., *War* 3.536, cf. 2.352, 2.397, 3.382; cf. Mason 2005, 262–267) and we are left to assume that the same logic (i.e., God's displeasure and shortening of reign) would have to apply here as well. Furthermore, Agrippa warns the people that if they go to war with the Romans, they will be made an example to deter other nations from revolting (*War* 2.397). One reads between the lines the contention that imperial rule is probably not as widely accepted as Dionysius portrays it, whether this is meant as a specific retort by Josephus to his predecessor or to this way of thinking common at the time.

Culturally speaking, imperial Greeks found themselves in a unique situation under Roman sway, namely, as possessors of a dominant *paideia* devoid of political power (cf. Swain 1996, 139–145; Whitmarsh 2001, 62–67). Dionysius's *Roman Antiquities* presents a novel and interesting hybridity in terms of both content, with Greeks as founders of Rome (contrary to the official Augustan line; Hill 1961), and genre, combining elements from both Herodotus and Thucydides (Usher 1982, 819–821). Dionysius even lets his authorial *persona* perform this hybridity, by stating at the outset of his work:

I arrived in Italy at the very time that Augustus Caesar put an end to the civil war, in the middle of the one hundred and eighty-seventh Olympiad and having from that time to this present day, a period of twenty-two years, lived at Rome, learned the language of the Romans and acquainted myself with their writings, I have devoted myself during all that time to matters

bearing upon my subject.

(Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.7.2–3, trans. Cary, LCL)

One is reminded of Josephus's description of his own learning of the Greek tongue (cf. Josephus's *epichôrion paideian ... kai tôn ellênikôn grammâtôn* in *Ant.* 20.263 with Dionysius's *grammâtôn tôn epichôrion*). It is no wonder that Dionysius's presentation appealed to Josephus, who appears to have emulated Dionysius's notion of hybridity in his own marriage of Jewish tradition and history with Greek language, style, and ideas—a fact echoed in the adoption of the genre of *Judean Antiquities* (Gabba 1991, 214–216). Josephus's *persona* displays himself as a sort of a culmination of this Greek and Jewish mixture to correspond to this birth of a new literary variety. In his adoption of Dionysius's forms to his work on the Jewish past, Josephus, apparently unconsciously, follows the Greek author's very concept of *mimêsis* (namely, of literary predecessors, evidenced in a fragmentary epitome and in his *Letter to Pompeius Geminus*; Usener 1889; Heath 1989) crucial to the manner imperial Greeks related to their past, in that sophisticated imitation of previous models brings about an artificially new complex creation which is superior (Whitmarsh 2001, 71–75).

Examples of these novel constructions, casting Jewish traditions in a new garb (despite his claim at *Ant.* 1.17) inspired by contemporary emphasis laid upon oratory, are frequently found in the *Judean Antiquities*. For instance, in his presentation of Moses, Josephus diverges from the biblical portrayal (Feldman 1992a, 1992b, 1993), and depicts Moses as more typical of the times in which the work was written. Thus, contrary to his well-known speech impediment (Exod. 4.10, 6.12), Moses is now turned into an accomplished speaker, who “in speech and in addresses to a crowd found favor in every way” (*Ant.* 4.328, trans. Thackeray, LCL; cf. *Ant.* 3.20, 22). Indeed, Aaron is no longer rendered as Moses' spokesman and in some scenes does not appear or is redundant (cf. Feldman 1992a, 311–312; 1998, 64–71; *Ant.* 2.280//Exod. 4.30; *Ant.* 2.281//Exod. 5.1). In the incident of Korah and the rebels (*Ant.* 4.14–58//Numbers 16:1–35; cf. Feldman 1998, 106–109), Moses appears to be placed in the familiar setting of a contemporary public declamation, in which bodily gestures were important (Whitmarsh 2005, 23–34). Moses the orator is made to raise his hands in his address to God (*Ant.* 4.40, which might also be an echo of Exod. 17.11; cf. Philostratus, *SV* 557 [Lucius]; Gleason 1995, 116) and weep at the end of his speech (*Ant.* 4.51; cf. Philostratus, *VS* 545, 574 [Herodes]). There is also an indication of Moses' use of raised voice (*Ant.* 4.40; cf. Philostratus, *SV* 570–571 [Alexander]).

In an interesting point regarding the Greek novel in his introduction to the Second Sophistic, Tim Whitmarsh (2005, 89) makes the somewhat provocative claim that “[t]he god of the Greek novel is indeed an improvising sophist.” It would be interesting to apply this notion to Josephus's portrayal of God in the *Judean Antiquities*. One such example is the very first speech in

the work (*Ant.* 1.46–47; non-biblical, *pace* Villalba i Varneda 1986, 106), delivered by God on the occasion of the punishment meted out to Adam and Eve for their sins. Josephus disregards the biblical conversation (*Gen.* 3.9–13) between three characters (God, Adam, and Eve) and puts an oratorical piece in the mouth of God as a retort to Adam’s silence:

Nay, I had decreed for you to live a life of bliss, unmolested by all ill, with no care to fret your souls; all things that contribute to enjoyment and pleasure were, through my providence, to spring up for you spontaneously, without toil or distress of yours; blessed with these gifts, old age would not soon have overtaken you and your life would have been long. But now thou hast flouted this my purpose by disobeying my commands; for it is through no virtue that thou keepest silence but through an evil conscience.

(trans. Thackeray, LCL)

It would seem that God here is portrayed in a manner resembling the public performances of a sophist. The context would be reminiscent of a *controversia*, that is, a forensic case, in which God argues both against Adam’s preceding behavior and his improper present silence during the hearing (cf. Aeschines, *In Ctes.* 216, cf. 239). The content and atmosphere are agonistic, and as sophists who were scrutinized for their conduct and appropriate judgment, so is Adam condemned for his untimely silence (on the impropriety of silence among the sophists, see Philostratus, *VS* 524 [Polemo]). That the circumstance is one of an improvised performance is seen through the anthropomorphic “entrance” of God to the garden (*Ant.* 4.45: *tou theou ... elthontos*; see Feldman 1998, 3) and his surprise which occasions an allegedly unprepared speech (cf. Philostratus, *VS* 572). The exact same situation would be understood differently by Josephus’s Jewish and Greco-Roman readers (Villalba i Varneda 1986, 59–64; Bilde 1988, 200–206; Feldman 1998, 543–544, 563; Gruen 1998, 16–22; Mason 1998, 2005a). If the latter are attentive enough, they might even be led to draw parallels between God’s annulment of the blissful condition he has prescribed to men upon discovery of Adam’s demeanor (cf. Feldman 1998, 3–8) and other known declamatory themes of legislators demanding to rescind their own laws (e.g., Solon, after discovering that Peisistratus has obtained a bodyguard: Philostratus, *VS* 542).

6.4 Conclusion

Indeed, Greek imperial literature and the corresponding growing phenomenon of public declamations were involved in a game of inclusion and exclusion. The key for the speech to achieve its effect is the audience’s familiarity with the examples and themes, the language and style, and therefore the extent of the orator’s originality (Russell 1983, 74–86, 106–127; Anderson 1989, 89–

103; 1993, 47–67; Swain 1996, 94–96, 193–194; Schmitz 1997, 156–159; Whitmarsh 2005, 24–32, 38–39). The declaimers on their part took pains at self-fashioning, displaying their identity, appearance, circumstances, and education, to create a public *persona* to be honored and accepted as part of the cultural elite (Anderson 1989, 146–152; Swain 1996, 87–89). Yet, there was a thin line between inclusion and exclusion, for the very educational process that set the boundaries between groups could be endorsed and mastered so as to enable people to cross the very borders it was supposed to uphold (cf. Whitmarsh 2001, 90–130, on the concept of *paideia*). On the other hand, in order to attain his goal and be accepted, the declaimer has to repeatedly pronounce his position of an outside figure, corresponding also to the requirements of deviation from tradition and of being innovative (Swain 1996, 81–87; Whitmarsh 2005, 34–37). The result was that one of the important features of the sophist's self-fashioning was his ability to move between worlds, between cultures or between center and periphery (Bowersock 1969, 43–58; 1974, 35–39; Jones 1978, 104–131; Desideri 1991; Swain 1996, 69–79, 192–197, 225–241). A special case in point would be that of the foreigner, who is able to become “Greek” yet has not relinquished his non-Greek identity—the two obvious cases are those of Lucian (Anderson 1976; Swain 1986, 70, 298–312, 329; Whitmarsh 2001, 116–129, 247–294, and 2005, 82–83) and Favorinus (Gleason 1995, 8–20, 145–158; Whitmarsh 2001, 119–121, 167–178), coming respectively from Samosata and Arles. Oddly enough, their foreignness ensured their success in integrating into this elite Greek community. A state of being an outsider, therefore, had to be highlighted. Hence the emphasis placed on the exilic mode of life, evidenced for instance, in Dio's *Oration* 13 (Jones 1978, 45–55; Swain 1996, 211–212; cf. Philostratus, *VS* 482) or Musonius Rufus, *That Exile Is Not an Evil* (Whitmarsh 2001, 134–180). Exile was present in the Second Sophistic from Aeschines onward (Philostratus, *VS* 481, 509, 562, 627).

This liminal existence, both within and outside Greek centers of culture, is also reflected in Josephus's works. He was not fully absorbed into Hellenic *paideia* and language (his accent would not allow it), yet he was properly there (or was it his assistants?). He was situated between Greeks and barbarians (Droge 1996; Rajak 2001b). He was part of the rebellion against the Romans, but not entirely there, and yet he was present at almost every important turn, a unique participating historical agent (cf. Chapman 2005b, on his position as a spectator of the events). As a Roman Jew (Goodman 1994), self-proclaimed to be close to circles of power (*Life* 428–429), it is no wonder that he emphasized the exilic experience of historic “court Jews” (see Feldman 1998, 556) like Joseph (*Ant.* 2.91–200; cf. Daube 1980 on Josephus as a latter-day Joseph) or Esther (*Ant.* 11.202–296; cf. Spilsbury 1998, 215–216, 224–225). While in exile, the mode of self-fashioning he labors to adopt appears to play with the theme of the exile/philosopher, common among authors of the period (cf. Cic., *Tusc. Disp.* 5.108; Diog. Laert. 6.21;

Whitmarsh 2001, 147–149), with his own variation. At the end of the *Judean Antiquities*, Josephus claims he is planning to write four books on “our [Jewish] doctrine concerning God, His nature, and concerning the laws” (*Ant.* 20.268; cf. 1.25 [“the inquiry ... highly philosophical,” *hê theôria lian philosophos*], 4.198). This work was not published but presumably was partially fulfilled in *Against Apion* (see [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay in this volume). These elements show that Josephus’s presentations of himself as a foreigner (*allosphylos*: *War* 1.16), an outsider or one not completely Hellenized, an image which was perhaps the very reason for his prolonged exclusion from modern scholarly treatments of Greek imperial literature, paradoxically proves that he was indeed very much part of it.

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For Greek literature in the imperial period, students should start with the studies by Anderson, Russell, Swain, and Whitmarsh. For works on Josephus as a writer in this milieu, see Thackeray, Runnalls, Rajak, Jones, Chapman, and Mason.

Two recent volumes of collected papers on Josephus treating his works especially within the context of literature and historiography at Rome:

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CHAPTER 7

Josephus and the Bible

Paul Spilsbury

7.1 Introduction

Recent readings of Josephus have paid close attention to his historical method, his use of sources, his biases, and loyalties, and his rhetorical and narrative strategies. Emerging from this work is a deepening appreciation of the extent to which his personal identity and historical outlook were shaped by the narrative and ideological shape of the Jewish scriptures. While it would be going too far to regard Josephus as a theologian or a biblical historian, it is nevertheless important to see him always in light of his commitments to the sacred texts and not just in those places where he explicitly cites the scriptures or retells the biblical story. Josephus's outlook was profoundly shaped by the Bible and his interpretation of current events is never devoid of biblically derived assumptions and perspectives. Further, like many other Hellenistic-Jewish writers of his era, Josephus's relationship with the scriptures was far from passive. Rather, we often find him engaged in shaping, molding, and creatively reordering the biblical narrative to his own particular ends, be they political, rhetorical, sociological, or religious. For all of these reasons a fully developed understanding of Josephus must pay careful attention to the subject at hand. As we do so, we are given an insight into the power of the biblical narrative to shape identity, and also of the remarkable uses to which malleable and adaptable religious texts might be put (see also [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz on *Jewish Antiquities* in this volume).

7.2 Personal Formation

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem, Josephus received from Titus a gift of sacred books (*bibliôn hierôn*, *Life* 418). While it would be unwise to read too much into what is in many ways a self-serving account, it coheres with what he says elsewhere (*Apion* 1.42–43; 2.218, 232–233, 272, 292; *War* 2.152–153) about Jewish devotion to the sacred texts even in the most extreme of circumstances (Rajak 2002, 124–126). Still more importantly, it is emblematic of the historian's self-presentation as a man of the scriptures, for Josephus claims to have been the premier biblical scholar of his time. Not only had he been a child prodigy with a particular penchant for

legal matters (*Life* 7–9), but even in later life he claims still to be widely acknowledged to excel among all of his compatriots in the learning of the Jews (*Ant.* 20.263). In context, both of these references refer to attainments in biblical scholarship of sorts (Mason 2001, 14), and as the *Judean Antiquities* draws to a close Josephus tells us that among the Jews the highest praise is reserved for those with “an exact knowledge of the law and who are capable of interpreting the meaning of the Holy Scriptures” (*Ant.* 20.264; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Further, of the many who have undertaken the laborious training (*askêsis*) to become expert in the scriptures, only two or three have progressed far enough to see the kind of fruit that Josephus himself can boast (*Ant.* 20.265).

This attachment to the Bible is not surprising, considering its central role in the circles in which Josephus moved. In the opening paragraphs of the *Life* he tells us that his education included time spent with each of the three main sects of Judaism (*Life* 10–12). At least two of these groups, the Pharisees and the Essenes, were known for their devotion to the Bible. Of the Pharisees, he says that they are regarded as the most accurate interpreters of “the laws” (*ta nomima*, *War* 2.162), and of the Essenes that they are versed from their early years in “holy books” (*biblois hierais*, *War* 2.159). It is therefore entirely likely that Josephus’s time under their tutelage would have included, among other things, instruction in their particular approaches to biblical interpretation (Blenkinsopp 1974, 257–259; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). Still, while all of this contributes to our picture of a man thoroughly conversant in the religious and philosophical concerns of the scripturally trained elite of his day, what is lacking in Josephus’s account of his youthful formation, compressed though it is, is any indication of what was involved in training to be a priest, for that is what he claims to have been (*Life* 1–2; *War* 1.3). While there is some reason to wonder whether his sacerdotal pedigree ever resulted in active service in the temple at all, Ed P. Sanders has argued that the detailed nature of his extensive knowledge of the temple and the clear evidence that he is not simply summarizing the biblical regulations indicate that he was relying on first-hand knowledge and personal experience gained both in school and as he “watched,” “assisted,” and later “worked” in the temple (Sanders 1992, 103; see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume). In the end, it does not perhaps matter so much whether Josephus was an active priest or not, since what is more significant for our purposes is his claim that his priestly heritage and upbringing guaranteed unusual expertise in the interpretation of the scriptures (*War* 3.352). On this point, more later.

For now, whether as a hereditary priest or in some other aspect of his upbringing, it is apparent that Josephus would have received a thorough grounding in the content and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. This foundation served to shape his self-identity all the way through adult life, not least because of the association in his mind between priesthood and

stewardship of the scriptures. In *Against Apion* 1.29, we read that care of the ancestral “records” (*anagraphas*), a term that includes both genealogies in particular and the scriptures more generally (Barclay 2007), was entrusted to the “chief priests and prophets.” And again, in *Against Apion* 2.194, Josephus will indicate that it is the duty of the high priest, along with the rest of the priests, to “safeguard the laws” (*phulaxeî tous nomous*). Further corroboration of this point is provided by several passages in the *Judean Antiquities* in which Josephus implies that the scriptures were in fact deposited in the temple for safe keeping (*Ant.* 3.38; 4.302–304; 5.61), a point which throws light on the gift of sacred books given to Josephus when the temple is destroyed.

7.3 History and Prophecy

Another aspect of Josephus’s sense of connection to the scriptures is in relation to his role as a national historian. Already in the Book of Chronicles (e.g., 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15, 13) there is an understanding of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible as the historians of Israel. Joseph Blenkinsopp has argued that “the Chronicler refers to prophetic sources to such an extent and in such a way as to leave little doubt that he regards the writing of history as a prophetic task” (1974, 241; see also Hall 1991, 28). It is this notion that Josephus is invoking in *Against Apion* 1.37 when he argues that prophets not only recorded the events of their own times but also those of distant antiquity, which they learned “by inspiration from God” (*kata tēn epinoian apo tou theou*; see also *Apion* 1.29). A few paragraphs later it becomes clear that those who wrote of their own times were the biblical prophets who recorded in thirteen books the events “from the death of Moses until Artaxerxes.” The more ancient period lasting three thousand years “from the birth of humanity up to [Moses’] death” was recorded by none other than Moses himself (*Apion* 1.39–40). For the period after Artaxerxes until his own time, the historical accounts cannot be accorded the same degree of authority, Josephus explains, since “the exact line of succession of the prophets did not continue” (*Apion* 1.41). This is an important admission because Josephus in another place positions his own account of Jewish history in precisely this period, stating, “I shall therefore begin my work at the point where the historians of these events and our prophets conclude” (*War* 1.18; trans. Thackeray, LCL).

Unremarkable though we may deem this acknowledgment, there are other places where Josephus seems to be insinuating a very close kinship, even continuity, with the biblical prophets. At the beginning of the *Judean Antiquities*, for example, Josephus claims to be providing a meticulous translation of the Hebrew Bible on the model of the Septuagint, “neither adding nor omitting anything” (*Ant.* 1.10–17; trans. Thackeray, LCL). While

the expansive biblical paraphrase that follows hardly bears out this claim of fidelity to the biblical original, what is most interesting here is that Josephus gives the reader no indication at all of the moment when his narrative passes from scriptural narrative to post-biblical history (see *Ant.* 11.296–297). By omitting to flag the transition, he implicitly presents the entire work as a translation of the Bible. Thus, as he brings the *Judean Antiquities* to a close some nine books later, he reiterates the point that the contents of the whole work are “all as recorded by the Holy Scriptures” (*Ant.* 20.261; trans. Feldman, LCL), once again seeming to make the claim that his entire project bears the stamp of biblical authority. Finally, when defending his integrity as a historian in *Against Apion* 1.54, he once again characterizes the entire contents of the *Judean Antiquities* as a “translation of our sacred books” (see also *Apion* 1.1, 127). Nevertheless, even given these statements, one doubts whether Josephus would have gone so far as to equate his own historical writings explicitly with the inspired scriptures. As we have noted already, when referring to the twenty-two-book canon of the Hebrew Bible, he clearly distinguishes between the writings of the biblical prophets and those historical works that cover the period after Artaxerxes (*Apion* 1.37–41). Still, the modern reader of the *Judean Antiquities* experiences a certain discomfort with his tactics. It is as if we have detected a ruse or an inept sleight of hand whereby Josephus seems to have been intent on investing the entire *Judean Antiquities* with a level of venerability and authority not usually associated with ordinary history.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, for Josephus, his priestly status, his personal attachment to the scriptures, and the prophetic role of historians in the Bible coalesce into a powerful self-understanding that affects his tone and purpose throughout his writing. The incident that illuminates this more than any other is his notorious surrender to Vespasian at Jotapata in the early stages of the war against Rome (*War* 3.340–408). In a scene charged with high anxiety, Josephus relates the following about himself in third person narrative:

[S]uddenly there came back into his mind those nightly dreams, in which God had foretold to him the impending fate of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns. He was an interpreter of dreams and skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of the Deity; a priest himself and of priestly descent, he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books. At that hour he was inspired to read their meaning, and, recalling the dreadful images of his recent dreams, he offered up a silent prayer to God. “Since it please thee,” so it ran, “who didst create the Jewish nation, to break thy work, since fortune has wholly passed to the Romans, and since thou hast made choice of my spirit to announce the things that are to come, I willingly surrender to the Romans and consent to live; but I take thee to witness that I go, not as a traitor, but as thy minister.”

Priestly lineage and biblical expertise are clearly in evidence here, but so too is another element, namely, the interpretation of dreams and of “ambiguous utterances of the Deity.” Here we encounter another important aspect of Josephus’s relationship with the Bible, namely, his personal identification with certain specific individuals. In the present case, numerous elements within this description of events are strikingly reminiscent of the biblical Daniel who was also famously called upon to interpret obscure dreams relating to the rise and fall of nations (Gray 1993; Mason 1994; Spilsbury 2003). Later on in the *War* (5.391; see also *Life* 17–18), Josephus presents himself not so much as a Daniel but as a Jeremiah, proclaiming the folly of resisting the imperial aggressor, and paying a personal price for his pains (Cohen 1982; Hall 1991). What is distinctive in Josephus’s case is the convergence of dream interpretation with the scriptural exegesis associated with his priestly status and formation. In the heat of this most dreadful moment, Josephus tells us, he was granted a divine “aha” in which the meaning of the scriptures (most likely the prophecies of Daniel and Balaam; see Spilsbury 2003) and his own recent dreams coalesce into a most dramatic proposition. In other passages, it is the person of the patriarch Joseph, another dream interpreter, who seems to have exerted a palpable attraction for Josephus (*Ant.* 4.11–167), while in *Judean Antiquities* 11.195–296, the historian identifies with the plight of Esther and Mordecai in their struggle to defend the Jewish people from annihilation (Daube 1980). Whether these associations are merely subconscious or are deliberate projections of himself onto the biblical narrative, they support the thesis that Josephus is so thoroughly saturated with scripture that he is unable to describe history without shaping it to fit certain patterns and forms laid down in the Bible itself and, further, that the modern reader must always be aware of the formative influence exerted by the Bible on our historian.

7.4 Canon, Text, and Translation

In addition to the broad influence that the scriptures exerted on Josephus’s historical project, an extensive section of the *Judean Antiquities* (1.27–11.196) amounts to a retelling or a paraphrase of the Bible. Describing his work this way, however, is a departure from the way Josephus presents it, for he would have his readers believe that what he has offered is actually a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew text that sets forth “the precise details of what is in the scriptures,” (*ta ... akribê tôn en tais anagraphais*) in which nothing is either added or omitted (*Ant.* 1.17; see also *Apion* 1.42). While the historical precedent for this kind of translation is said to be none other than the production of the Septuagint, Josephus has superseded their work, he

states, by covering not only the Pentateuch but the rest of the Jewish Bible as well (*Ant.* 1.10–12). It does not take a close reading, though, to discover that Josephus’s version is anything but a literal translation. Not only does he omit large sections of the original and add material of his own, despite his promise to do neither, but even where he does follow the biblical story fairly closely, he adapts, shapes, and colors the material in ways that have long been the subject of extensive and detailed study (e.g., Feldman 1998a; 1998b; Spilsbury 1998b). Broadly speaking, Josephus’s biblical paraphrase is not dissimilar to other examples of the “rewritten” Bible in Jewish antiquity, such as Jubilees, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, and Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*. Similar material is also found in such Hellenistic-Jewish authors as Eupolemus, Demetrius, Artapanus, and Ezekiel the Tragedian, as well as in Philo and the rabbinic literature of subsequent centuries. While scholars debate the definition and intentions of these works, it is generally understood that “rewritten Bibles” were attempts to adapt and apply the scriptures to the realities of the writers’ own circumstances while at the same time incorporating within them the interpretive insights drawn from the exegetical tradition based on those texts (Alexander 1988). As Erich Gruen has shown, rather than challenging or seeking to replace the biblical narratives, these interpreters honored the tradition while making it speak to new historical realities (1998, 111). Thus, whatever modern readers may think of Josephus’s promise to render the biblical text with scrupulous faithfulness, it is unlikely that he would have thought of himself as doing anything other than offering to his Romanized readers the true essence of what the biblical narrative was in fact intending to communicate (Feldman 2000, 7–8; Rajak 2009, 253).

This issue also raises the question of which particular books Josephus regarded as authoritative scripture, a question that contributes to our understanding of development of the canon of the Hebrew Bible in the closing decades of the first century C.E. On this topic, he states:

[A]mong us there are not thousands of books in disagreement and conflict with each other, but only twenty-two books, containing the record of all time, which are rightly trusted. Five of these are the books of Moses, which contain both the laws and the tradition from the birth of humanity up to his death; this is a period of a little less than 3,000 years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, king of the Persians after Xerxes, the prophets after Moses wrote the history of what took place in their own times in thirteen books; the remaining four books contain hymns to God and instructions for people on life.

(*Apion* 1.38–40; trans. Barclay BJP)

Unfortunately, Josephus does not give the full details of the content of this twenty-two-book canon, and scholarly debate on the matter is extensive and ongoing (e.g., Beckwith 1985; Bruce 1988; Leiman 1989; Mason 2002;

McDonald 2007). While the books of Moses are obvious, the rest is not so clear. A possible accounting of the thirteen “prophets” is: Joshua, Judges + Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah + Lamentations, Ezekiel, the Twelve, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah (=Esdras), Daniel, Job, and Esther (Barclay 2007). The “remaining four” are also difficult to ascertain with certainty, but probably included the Psalms, the Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Qoheleth, though there is no way to arrive at any kind of certainty on the matter. So far as his history of Israel in the *Judean Antiquities* is concerned, it is worth noting that his account covers all of the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible as we now know it, though his failure to signal the end of the biblical period obscures his attitude to such books as 1 Maccabees or the *Letter of Aristeas*, for example.

Another related question has to do with the language of the biblical texts Josephus used, though no comprehensive study has been done (Feldman 1988). Such attempts as have been made to determine the textual *Vorlage* for specific sections of Josephus’s paraphrase have been largely inconclusive and subject to substantial criticism (see Feldman 1988, 460–466 for a helpful summary of the issues). Generally speaking, Josephus implies that he used a Hebrew text throughout (*Ant.* 1.12), and it would be surprising if he did not in fact have recourse to Hebrew biblical texts for his work. Additionally, there is also evidence that he had at his disposal Greek translations of the Bible (e.g., Begg and Spilsbury 2005, 265–266, on the various versions of the Book of Daniel Josephus may have used), and it is likely that he relied heavily on Greek texts throughout his biblical paraphrase. Indeed, as Tessa Rajak has noted, it is inconceivable that Josephus would have been able to complete a project of such mammoth proportions had prior Greek translations of the Bible not already existed (Rajak 2009, 252). There are also some scattered hints that he may have had access to texts resembling some of the extant Aramaic targums, though the evidence is not strong (Feldman 1988, 459–460). Indeed, while there is nothing intrinsically implausible about the idea of Josephus using Bible texts in each of these languages (Basser 1987, 21; Feldman 1988, 466), his expansive paraphrase is so loosely based on his source texts that determination of the precise character of those texts is now impossible (Rajak 2009, 252–253).

7.5 Readings

Josephus’s re-presentation of the Bible story at various points in his writings is a fascinating topic in its own right since his reading of scripture is central to his construction of identity both for himself and for his entire community (Spilsbury 1998b, 42–50). Rather than offering up merely commonplace or moralizing interpretations of the biblical stories, what he delivers is something

much more personal, even idiosyncratic at times. The first indication of the freedom with which Josephus could retell the biblical epic is not in the *Judean Antiquities*, but years before that in the *Judean War* in a scene in which he imbeds a stylized review of biblical history into one of his own speeches designed to persuade the insurgents within the city of Jerusalem to surrender (*War* 5.379–412). By careful selection of biblical material and the wholesale reshaping of specific episodes, Josephus produces a provocative and controversial manifesto for collaboration with the Romans. Thus, Abraham becomes a pious pacifist preferring to pray rather than resort to arms when Pharaoh abducts his wife. In the next scene, the ailing Israelites suffering under the burden of slavery in Egypt commit themselves to divine aid rather than resort to violence and consequently find themselves conducted out of Egypt by God, “without bloodshed, without risk.” Discreetly passing over the stories of the conquest of the land in silence, Josephus next tells the story of the capture of the ark by the Philistines and how “the whole nation of those raiders” came to rue the deed. God’s leadership, Josephus says, won the day without any help from human hand or Israelite weapon, and the sanctity of the shrine was restored. Then, again in the time of Sennacherib, the foreign invader was routed by arms raised in prayer rather than by an army, and they fled from the Hebrews “who were neither armed nor pursuing.” Finally, Josephus recalls the submissiveness of the Judean exiles who “never reared their heads for liberty” until Cyrus, in gratitude to God, sent them home to re-establish the temple. While this very one-sided reading of Israel’s national and military history has raised the eyebrows of many, it signals to us the fluidity and malleability of the biblical text in the hands of a historian with a particular agenda to communicate (Spilsbury 2005). Similar tendencies are in evidence at much greater length in the *Judean Antiquities*, as we have already noted. Scholarship of Josephus’s presentation of the biblical material here has addressed two broad issues, namely, the extent to which he drew on traditional Jewish exegesis of the scriptures, and the manner in which he consciously or unconsciously adapted his narrative to meet the tastes and interests of a Hellenized audience.

Readers of the *Judean Antiquities* soon realize that many of its narrative deviations from the Bible are to be found in other Jewish works as well, as noted above. Rather than ascribing this to his own education in Jewish interpretive traditions, Solomon Rappaport (1930) argued that all Josephus’s claims about his own education and learning are tendentious and highly dubious, since much of his literary output is characterized by personal apologetic against such detractors as Justus of Tiberias (see *Life* 35, 40–41, 359–360). Further, Rappaport contended that even if Josephus really did receive a Jewish education in his early youth, it is highly unlikely that he would have been able to use it effectively in later life. After all, he entered political life relatively early, became versed in military affairs and so almost certainly neglected his scholarly interests for many years, thus in effect losing

all connection with Palestine and the living tradition of Judaism. Rappaport therefore argued that the traditional elements in Josephus's text are to be ascribed not to remembered learning but to written sources such as the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the Jewish Hellenists, Philo, and the targums, all of which he excerpted and combined into an original composition. More recent scholarship regards Rappaport's thesis as an overstatement and is more willing to allow to Josephus ongoing knowledge of, and engagement with, Jewish interpretive traditions well into adult life (Feldman 1988, 471–472). Further, it must be stressed that although Josephus has clearly drawn on traditional sources in his presentation of the biblical narrative, the final product is not simply a compilation of traditions. On the contrary, it is a creative and coherent personal statement of the history of the Jews. This is not to say that Josephus's approach to the tradition is novel, but only that the very nature of the enterprise means that he has produced a uniquely personal contribution to that tradition (Spilsbury 1998b).

Another important aspect of Josephus's rewriting of the Bible is the way in which it reflects the style and conventions of Greek literature. The very title of the work, for instance, suggests an attempt to place the work in a particular category of historiography, and perhaps even to correspond to Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities* which, like Josephus's work, was also divided into twenty books (Rajak 1982). Also, the style of the Greek occasionally reflects literary aspirations. In an oft-cited lecture published in 1929, Henry St. J. Thackeray (1929, 100–124) argued that *Judean Antiquities* Books 15 and 16 show evidence of a Greek assistant with a particular love for Sophocles, and that the hand of a somewhat inferior “Thucydidean hack” could be discerned in Books 17–19. In the introduction to the Loeb edition of the *Judean Antiquities*, Thackeray applied his theory to the biblical portion of Josephus's narrative, which he argued betrayed the handiwork of the same two assistants. Subsequent scholars have criticized Thackeray's thesis (e.g., Richards 1939; Petersen 1958; Shutt 1961; Feldman 1970) as having too little clear evidence. Furthermore, we should note that Josephus himself informs us that he “laboured strenuously to partake of the realm of Greek prose and poetry” in order to accomplish the writing of *Judean Antiquities* (*Ant.* 20.263; trans. Feldman, LCL). Whether this work would have enabled him to incorporate his own classical styling into his narrative is open to question.

Another form of Hellenization that occurs in Josephus's paraphrase of the Bible is his characterization of the main figures in his narrative. While Josephus tended to use standard encomiastic terminology in this regard, Louis H. Feldman has shown in numerous studies (e.g., Feldman 1998a, 1998b) that Josephus Hellenized the biblical narrative in three basic ways. First, in his anxiety to appeal to cultured tastes for romance, heroism, philosophy, and suspense, Josephus imported into the text appropriate novelistic features to meet this need. Second, and for similar motives, he cast the biblical characters

in terms clearly redolent of classical models drawn from Euripides or Sophocles. And third, Feldman argues that Josephus consistently ascribed to his heroes the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, plus the additional (Jewish) virtue of piety. While there can be no question that Feldman is correct in the general contours of his argument, it is not always correct to assume that instances of Hellenization in the *Judean Antiquities* are to be taken as instances of propaganda or apologetic, as Feldman seems to suggest. They are often just as likely to be genuine expressions of Josephus's own (Hellenized) understanding of the biblical narrative.

7.6 Identity

One of the most important things to note regarding Josephus's use of the Bible is its place in formulating a new image of the Jews and Judaism in the last decades of the first century C.E. (Spilsbury 1998b). In an era when hostility and suspicion had become a common Jewish experience in the cities of the empire (Goodman 2007, 439–442), Josephus set about portraying the Jewish people and their history in terms that would resonate with the tastes, preferences, and values of a gentile audience. His goal was to win for the Jews a “space” in which to be able to conduct themselves with reasonable levels of self-determination, at least when it came to the fundamental desire to live unmolested and peaceful lives in accordance with their own communal laws and traditions. This project provides unifying and cohesive impetus to Josephus's adaptation of the biblical history and despite the evidence of personal apologetic and special pleading at numerous points in the story, we may, nevertheless, still discern a coherent message in service of a larger and more admirable purpose.

The picture that emerges is complex and variegated, but we may note several key elements by way of summary. First of all, Josephus insists, the Jews must be understood in the light of their own particular and venerable history going all the way back to Abraham their father (*Ant.* 1.158; 3.87; 5.97, 113; 8.115; 11.169; 14.255). Josephus's whole project asserts the basic fact that knowledge of the five-thousand-year history of the Jews is essential for a proper appreciation of who they are and what they have to offer to the world at large. Second, as we have already seen, the Jews in Josephus's biblical paraphrase are a profoundly virtuous people. All the main Bible characters possess the cardinal virtues so valued in antiquity. They are pious, good, just, and kind to the poor, widows, and orphans. They are wise, courageous, hard-working, generous, orderly, skilled in rhetoric, and have complete control of their passions and emotions. They are people of high mental abilities, and their way of life may be characterized as intelligent and rational. Further to

this point, the Jews are a people who live under an ordered constitution, the Law of Moses (*Ant.* 4.196). This constitution is of the highest possible virtue and excellence since it is a gift from God himself and a token of divine favor. Thus, ultimately, God himself is the ruler of the Jews, and Josephus will eventually coin the term “theocracy” (*Apion* 2.165) to designate the Jewish constitution. God’s will is higher than any other principle and must be obeyed to the letter on all occasions. Personal autonomy is to be subjected to the rule of Law. Although Josephus speaks on several occasions of liberty as a gift of God, what he means is freedom to live in submission to the Torah. He insists, on the one hand, that God’s laws are not vehicles of slavery yet, on the other hand, Moses’ authority is higher than individual freedom (*Ant.* 4.146). Furthermore, Josephus envisages an ideal scenario in which the Law of Moses is administered by the temple authorities who function as the guardians both of the Jews’ national heritage and of their relationship with the Deity. Josephus thus could thus also describe the form of government under which the Jews lived as an “aristocracy” (*Ant.* 4.223; 6.36), for its human officials were the High Priest and the Levitical priests under him (Spilsbury 1996, 362–366).

Under this constitution, Josephus asserts the enduring importance of the one legitimate temple with its sacrificial system (*Ant.* 4.200; *Apion* 2.193–194). There is little to suggest that Josephus envisioned a temple-less form of Judaism despite the fact that at the time of writing the temple had been destroyed and the priesthood was inoperative (Goodman 2007, 426). The temple and its authorities were essential aspects of Josephus’s picture of Judaism and he apparently expected their eventual restitution. Therefore, we find Josephus still concerned with such things as the strict genealogical controls that governed who could enter the priesthood (*Apion* 1.30). It is also not surprising to read in the *Jewish War* that Josephus attributed much of the blame for the destruction of the Jewish state to the desecration of the temple (*War* 5.400–412).

A third aspect of Josephus’s formulation of Jewish identity centers on the biblical notion of covenant. In keeping with the scriptures, Josephus continues to assert that the Jews have a profound knowledge of the true God and stand in unique relationship with him. Despite the fact that he nowhere uses the term “covenant” to describe this relationship, there can be little doubt that Josephus has retained the basic idea of it (Spilsbury 1998a). The pagan seer Balaam declares that God has regard for the Israelites alone (*Ant.* 4.114) and that he is watching over their affairs to ensure their welfare and happiness. In numerous other places as well, such as in God’s dealings with Abraham and Isaac (*Ant.* 1.183–185, 234–235), or the way he treats the Israelites at the time of their refusal to enter the promised land (*Ant.* 3.313), there is a bold assertion of a unique and enduring relationship between God and the Jews.

Finally, although the overall contours of Josephus’s characterization of Jews

and Judaism might seem to be fairly predictable within the context of Hellenistic-Jewish apologetics of this era, it is important to note the strains of national pride and even of defiance that emerge from time to time in his work (Spilsbury 2005). While modern readers might look for more explicit expressions of opposition to Rome from this Jew writing in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem, we must be careful to take account of the fact that, for a range of obvious practical reasons, it would have been counterproductive for Josephus to give voice to overt criticism of Rome. Instead, we should expect to find in Josephus's works subtle "hints of cultural defiance" suggestive of a more cautious approach to the unequal power relation so clearly at play (Barclay 2005, 321). Reading Josephus in this mode helps us to move beyond the narrowly personal-psychological terms in which Josephus's relationship to the Romans has usually been viewed, and to see him in a more complex and interesting light as an individual coming to terms with the political and social constraints under which he worked.

7.7 Conclusion

Whatever else might be said about Josephus the man, it is clear that he was a person profoundly shaped by the narrative of Israel found within the pages of the Bible. Rather than being a passive recipient of biblical teachings or traditions, Josephus, like many other Jewish readers of scripture in his time, read the ancient texts as transcripts of divine purpose. Inscrutable though the mind of God may be, the sensitive reader could expect to find in the Bible a guide for successful negotiation of the shoals and reefs of the troubled seas of life. Josephus's actions during the war against Rome have often been taken as proof that he was a scoundrel who abandoned not only the people he was charged to lead, but his faith, traditions, and national life as well. The vast literary output of the last decades of his life would seem to counter this supposition, however, especially when we note the ongoing engagement with the Bible and its prescriptions. Yet, scripture was not just a list of laws or abstract principles for Josephus. For him, its historical narrative offered a model for meaning and purpose in the complex and tortured times in which he lived as a displaced Jew of the Diaspora.

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FURTHER READING

Josephus's self-understanding as an inspired prophet is very helpfully laid out in Joseph Blenkinsopp's 1974 article entitled "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus." The complex topic of the formation of the biblical canon, and the contribution made to the debate by Josephus's statements on the subject are very helpfully rehearsed by Steve Mason (2002). Students wishing to engage in detailed analysis of Josephus's paraphrase of the Bible should consult Louis Feldman's numerous studies on the subject which are now conveniently

collected into two volumes listed as 1998a and 1998b in the References. In addition to this, they should consult the available Brill Josephus Project volumes covering the first half of the *Jewish Antiquities*, namely Feldman (2000), Begg (2005), and Begg and Spilsbury (2005). For those wanting to understand Josephus's biblical material in light of other Hellenistic-Jewish authors who were engaged in similar projects, Erich Gruen's *Heritage and Hellenism* (1998) is an excellent place to start. For a discussion of these matters with particular reference to the emergence of the Septuagint within the Greek-speaking Jewish world, students should consult Tessa Rajak's *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (2009). A discussion of the ways in which Josephus's physical location near the heart of Roman power affected his presentation of the Bible to a hostile audience may be found in Paul Spilsbury's "Reading the Bible in Rome" (2005), while a comprehensive picture of how Josephus presents a new formulation of Jewish identity to a Jewish and gentile audience may be found in his *The Image of the Jew in Flavius Josephus' Paraphrase of the Bible* (1998b).

CHAPTER 8

Josephus and Philo in Rome

Maren R. Niehoff

8.1 Introduction

Josephus settled in Rome under highly suspect circumstances, which many have interpreted as a betrayal of his nation for personal benefit. His writings, all composed in Rome, have thus often been read as reflecting Josephus's hypocrisy or possible attempts to flatter the Flavians. Recently, the issue of Josephus's stay in Rome, as well as his engagement with Roman culture, has been studied in a more balanced manner. Steve Mason, for example, shows in this volume that Josephus actively participated in contemporary Roman discourses and addressed non-Jewish audiences in order to integrate his people into the larger narrative of the Empire (see [Chapter 5](#) by Mason in this volume on Josephus as a Roman historian).

Important insights into Josephus's role and achievements can be gained by looking at Philo of Alexandria, his famous Jewish predecessor in Rome. In the autumn of 38 C.E., Philo arrived in Rome as the head of the Jewish embassy to the emperor Gaius, which—Josephus tells us—came to confirm the civil rights of the Jews in Alexandria after the pogrom there (*Ant.* 18.259–260). The embassy was delayed because of Gaius's unpredictable behavior and lack of interest (Harker 2008). Philo stayed in Rome at least until early 41 C.E., when Gaius was assassinated, and most probably much longer in order to continue the negotiations with his successor, Claudius. Philo mentions Claudius as “Caesar” and alludes to an event during his reign (*Legat.* 206). Such references show that Philo was aware of the political changes of his day and wrote some of his works in connection with them.

Staying in Rome much longer than expected, Philo began to use his time for literary purposes, as many other ambassadors had done before him. Traditionally ambassadors were intellectuals from elite families in their local community who came to Rome and engaged its audience not only in political discussions but also in intellectual conversations. A famous group of Athenian ambassadors delivered public lectures while in Rome and caused much alarm among Roman conservatives, such as Cato the Elder (Plut., *Cat. M.* 22). The Greek philosopher, Plutarch, who came for frequent visits to Rome and may even have encountered Josephus there, recalls how busy he had been teaching philosophy (Plut., *Dem.* 2). Apion and the Stoic philosopher Chaeremon, who were both most probably members of the competing

Egyptian embassy to Gaius, had such an impact on public opinion with their writings that Josephus a generation later still felt compelled to refute them (Tcherikover et al. 1960, 2:39; see [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay on *Against Apion* in this volume). Josephus himself came to Italy in 64 C.E. as an elite Judean representative seeking the release of fellow priests held in Rome (*Life* 13–16; on this episode, see Den Hollander 2014, 27–66).

Certain works of Philo have been dated to his Roman period and need to be distinguished on stylistic as well as philosophical grounds from his earlier Alexandrian writings (Niehoff 2011a). Such “Roman works” include the historical treatises on the embassy and the Roman prefect Flaccus as well as the *Exposition*, a series of writings which provides a broad outline of biblical themes (Niehoff 2001, 2011b). All of these treatises address a broader audience not familiar with Judaism and are of great interest for us in the context of Josephus, who also aimed at a wide-ranging public.

While the circumstances of Josephus’s writing are relatively well known, the conditions of Philo’s literary activity in Rome remain shrouded in uncertainty. Josephus tells us that he enjoyed the support of a patron, called Epaphroditus, who probably also hosted public discussions of his work in Rome (*Ant.* 1.8, *Apion* 1.1). Philo, on the other hand, came from one of the richest families in the ancient world, with his brother lending money to kings (Schwartz 2009), and thus had most probably no need of a patron. As a friend of the Jewish king, Agrippa, he had easy access to Roman circles and is likely to have made many new acquaintances upon his arrival in the capital. Such contacts were facilitated by the fact that Roman intellectuals were bilingual and could easily read as well as discuss works written in Greek. Both Philo and Josephus spoke Greek (Josephus, to be sure, as a second language) and composed their works in that tongue. They could thus hope to reach a broad audience in Rome as well as in the larger intellectual community abroad (but see [Chapter 5](#) by Mason in this volume).

Philo’s “Roman works” show how a Jewish intellectual from the Greek East became acculturated within his Roman context, creatively using new genres of writing and new philosophical ideas. All of these factors are crucial for a proper understanding of Josephus, who came to Rome a generation later and went through a similar process of acculturation. While Josephus is often credited with having written the first extant history of Judaism, Philo in fact preceded him and wrote both on biblical as well as on contemporary history. It is worthwhile comparing Josephus’s account of Gaius and Tiberius with that of Philo, who lived at the same time as these Roman emperors. In the field of philosophy, too, a comparison of Philo and Josephus is highly rewarding. While Philo is generally acknowledged as a philosopher, Josephus is usually not examined from a philosophical point of view. It is nevertheless important to observe that Philo promptly engaged with a distinctly Roman form of philosophy, which can subsequently also be identified in the works of

8.2 Josephus and Philo as Ancient Historians in Rome

While Josephus started his literary career as an historian of contemporary events, which he knew from personal experience, Philo turned to historiography only at a later stage in his career. This change of orientation on the part of Philo allows us to appreciate the Roman component of his turn to historiography, which played a significant role also in Josephus's work.

It is only in his "Roman works" that Philo begins to write in an historical mode. Earlier he had composed systematic commentaries for a Jewish audience on the *Books of Genesis* and *Exodus*, using the well-known techniques of scholarship practiced in Alexandria (Niehoff 2011a). In the *Exposition*, by contrast, he addresses a broader audience unfamiliar with Judaism and explains to them the biblical narratives as well as the main principles of Mosaic Law. To such general readers, Philo presents the Jewish scriptures as consisting of two parts, namely "one historical, the other concerned with commands and prohibitions" (*Mos.* 2.46; trans. Colson, LCL). Moses is compared favorably to "any historian" and is said to have written history with an emphasis on moral admonition (*Mos.* 2.48). Mosaic history is instructive and useful, Philo explains, because it starts with the creation of the world and focuses on character (*Mos.* 2.47). Readers of the Bible will thus realize that the Creator God is also the lawgiver of the world, prompting the observers of His laws to follow Nature. The generations of biblical heroes furthermore demonstrate that the impious are punished, while the just receive divine rewards.

Philo's conception of Moses as an historian and of himself as an expounder of ancient history is strikingly novel. One generation later Josephus introduces his *magnum opus* in a similar fashion. He, too, initially complains about other historians, who have written for the wrong reasons and relied on the wrong evidence, thus defying the truth (*Ant.* 1.1–4). His own story, Josephus asserts, is based on the right sources, namely the Holy Scriptures. Like Philo before him, he identifies the Torah as "history," which teaches that "men who conform to the will of God and do not dare to transgress laws excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief" (*Ant.* 1.14; adapted from Thackeray, LCL).

In both the *Jewish War* and in *Against Apion* Josephus pointedly contrasts his own historiographical efforts to those of Greek writers (Goodman 1999, 45–58; Barclay 2007, 365–366; Cohen 2010, 121–132; see [Chapters 1, 3, and 5](#) by Mason and [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay in this volume). He follows in the

footsteps of Philo, albeit with a much greater self-awareness as an historian. In the opening of the *Jewish War*, Josephus stresses that he presents his account “as a foreigner,” distancing himself from the “native Greeks,” who are incompetent “in the matter of history, where veracity and laborious collection of facts are essential” (*War* 1.16; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Ushering in his own work, he says: “Let us at least hold historical truth in honor, since by the Greeks it is disregarded” (*War* 1.16; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Josephus, who is acutely aware of his marginal position in Roman society and faces considerable animosity following the failure of the Jewish Revolt, stresses more than other historians current Roman stereotypes against the Greeks. He thus contributes to the construction of Roman identity, encouraging pride in Rome’s historiographical tradition. Josephus moreover inscribes himself into the local discourse and offers himself as a worthy as well as reliable author, who plays a pioneering role in Roman culture.

In *Against Apion*, Josephus similarly undermines Greek claims to excellence in historiography and identifies two main reasons for the inaccuracy of their works. Individual writers, he explains, relied on contradictory conjectures, because the Greeks neglected to keep official records of current events (*Apion* 1.19–21). Moreover, Greek historians did not write in order to discover and present the truth, but rather to “display their literary ability” in comparison to others (*Apion* 1.24–25; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Josephus pays special attention to two problematic historians among the Greeks, namely Apion and Chaeremon, who most likely served on the Egyptian embassy to Gaius and competed with the Jewish embassy for the emperor’s sympathy. They were Philo’s direct contemporaries, who were in Rome at the same time as he was. It is highly significant that Josephus speaks of these two as having attempted to write history, but utterly failing in their task. While Chaeremon “claims to write a history of Egypt,” he did not rely on serious sources, but he and Manetho invented stories “according to their fantasy” (*Apion* 1.288, 293; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Apion, too, is criticized by Josephus for having produced mean “lies,” which betray his utter ignorance of the subjects he wrote about (*Apion* 2.3–6, 12). Apion’s five volumes of *Aegyptiaca* focused on history, both ancient and contemporary, as well as “accusations against our temple rites and our ordinances in general” (*Apion* 2.7; trans. Thackeray, LCL). While ostensibly writing an Egyptian history, Apion engaged to no small degree in polemics against the Jews and their involvement in the history of his country.

While it is well known that Josephus countered the works of Apion and Chaeremon, it is usually overlooked that Philo had already responded to their arguments. His *Exposition* is divided, as we have seen, into history and “commands and prohibitions,” thus repeating the structure of Apion’s work and presenting a rectified picture of each of the subjects previously criticized. Moreover, Philo’s appeal to the Holy Scriptures and Jewish oral traditions

directly counters Apion's reliance on hearsay "from 'old people'" (*Apion* 2.13; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Familiar with such hostile accounts, Philo offers in the *Exposition* his own, much more favorable view of the Jewish past and anticipates Josephus's achievement in *Against Apion*. Philo, for example, deals already with the slander about the Jewish custom of circumcision (*Spec. Laws* 1.1–11), which Apion had circulated and to which Josephus responds a generation later (*Apion* 2.141–144; 2.28–30; 2.80–88).

Philo's *Exposition* is in one more respect highly relevant for a better understanding of Josephus's historiography. Philo's *Lives* of the Patriarchs as well as his *Life of Moses* illustrate an approach to history, which revolves around people rather than institutions or war strategies. Steve Mason has shown that Josephus's historiography centers on persons with an individual character, arguing that this style of writing was popular in Rome (Mason 2003a, 55–146; 2003b). These insights can now be confirmed and deepened by looking at Philo. Upon his arrival in Rome Philo quickly became a pioneer in biographical studies, a genre just beginning to develop in Rome with which he himself had never experimented before (Niehoff 2012). The Roman writer Nepos had already composed several biographies of public figures, but remained a mediocre author with little literary talent. The main characteristics of the fully developed biography, such as we find them in the *Lives* written by Plutarch, are still missing in Nepos's work. Philo's *Lives*, on the other hand, are full biographies with emphasis on the individual personality of each hero. Their characteristic features subsequently resurface in Plutarch's biographies as well as in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.

Philo explains in the *Life of Moses* that the biographer aims at portraying a character by providing significant anecdotes. Such stories about the hero outline the nature and development of the person throughout his or her life. While anecdotes may seem "trifling" to some readers, Philo insists that they are in fact best suited to throw light on the inner character of a person (*Mos.* 1.51). In the case of Moses, Philo highlights his intervention on behalf of the shepherdesses at the well in Arabia as an exemplary scene. Hidden from the public eye, but well observed by Philo, Moses emerges as a true fighter for justice, who protects the girls against men who think they can abuse the solitude of the place to promote their own interests (*Mos.* 1.54–57). The girls' father immediately recognizes the greatness of Moses's deed and is "struck with admiration" for his appearance and disposition, when personally meeting him (*Mos.* 1.58–59; trans. Colson, LCL).

Signs of individual character are already visible in the early youth of a hero, which consequently receives special attention by the biographer. Philo studies Moses's youth and embellishes the biblical text with many significant stories. Initially, he outlines the historical circumstances of Moses's birth, namely his noble family background as well as the geographical conditions of Egypt (*Mos.* 1.5–7). Philo then distinguishes Moses and stresses that "the child from

his birth had an appearance of more than ordinary goodness” (*Mos.* 1.9; trans. Colson, LCL). Moreover, Moses provides a first proof of his “great nature” when rejecting the delights of the Egyptian court and devoting himself to “hearing and seeing what was sure to profit the soul” (*Mos.* 1.20; trans. Colson, LCL). Philo’s Moses is naturally inclined to modesty, discipline and learning, quickly surpassing his teachers, because “his mind was incapable of accepting any falsehood” (*Mos.* 1.22–24; trans. Colson, LCL).

Another interesting aspect of Philo’s *Life of Moses*, which deserves attention in the context of Josephus, is the fact that Moses is presented not only as a philosopher-king, but also as priest and prophet. A Roman reader would recognize this profile as highly familiar, because the Roman emperors regularly served as high priests, thus combining political with religious power. Philo transcends Plato’s far more secular ideal of the philosopher-king and stresses that Moses was also legislator, priest, and prophet (*Mos.* 2.2). It was by God’s “providence” that Moses was invested with all these roles, because they necessarily complement each other (*Mos.* 2.4–5).

A generation later, Josephus presents a strikingly similar image of Moses. Whether or not he ever read Philo’s *Life of Moses* (Feldman 1998, 52–54), Josephus obviously shares his biographical interests and general Roman orientation. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, too, Moses is introduced as a member of the upper classes and his life is geographically contextualized by a brief account of Egypt (*Ant.* 2.201–210). Moreover, Josephus pays attention to Moses’ infancy and uses it to portray the hero’s overall character. Moses emerges under Josephus’s pen as a well-grown and handsome boy of exceptional intelligence and indifferent to suffering (*Ant.* 2.224–231). Josephus explicitly states that Moses’ games expressed his outstanding spirit (*Ant.* 2.230). The most significant anecdote is the following: when held in Pharaoh’s arms, Moses suddenly “grasped his crown and threw it to the ground” (*Ant.* 2.233). This scene obviously foreshadows Moses’ inherent talents of leadership as well as his later opposition to Pharaoh. It is moreover interesting that Josephus, like Philo, highlights the religious and ritual aspects of Moses’ role (*Ant.* 2.275; 2.329–333).

In conclusion, Philo emerges as an important predecessor of Josephus in Rome. He positions himself as an historian of ancient Judaism in a distinctly Roman context and anticipates Josephus’s work in three important aspects: (1) he argues that his sources and methods are superior to those of Greek historians; (2) he responds to Apion as well as Chaeremon; and (3) he writes in a biographical style.

8.3 Josephus and Philo as Historians of

Contemporary Events

Josephus was undoubtedly more committed to the rules of historiography than Philo and reflects on his own profession more consciously. Many scholars even deny that Philo can be called an historian. A theologian writing on contemporary events would, in their view, be a more appropriate description. Do Philo and Josephus, however, differ so fundamentally in their accounts of the same events and in their overall approach? Put differently, do the differences between them necessarily lead to the conclusion that one was an historian, while the other was not, or should we rather think of differences along a continuous line?

Philo opens his account of the *Embassy to Gaius* with a direct theological appeal to his readers. How long, he asks, will people grow old without recognizing that fortune is “the most unstable of things” (*Legat.* 1)? Instead of being blinded by fortuitous circumstances, the reader should acknowledge God’s providence behind the political scenes and His special care for Israel (*Legat.* 3). It was divine protection, which helped the Jews against Gaius and ultimately led to his assassination (*Legat.* 367). God moreover saw to it that the Roman prefect Flaccus, who miserably failed the Jews, received his proper punishment and eventually even recognized divine providence in history (*Flac.* 164–165).

Josephus opens his account of the Jewish War with a striking acknowledgement of his own partiality. While he insists that he presents the events as they were, his interpretation of them is admittedly personal:

I shall faithfully recount the actions of both combatants [the Romans and the Jews]; but in my reflections on the events I cannot conceal my private sentiments, nor refuse to give my personal sympathies scope to bewail my country’s misfortunes. For, that it owed its ruin to civil strife, and that it was the Jewish tyrants who drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration [of the temple], is attested by Titus Caesar himself, who sacked the city ... Should, however, any critic censure me for my strictures upon the tyrants ... or for my lamentations over my country’s misfortunes, I ask his indulgence for a compassion which falls outside an historian’s province.

(*War* 1.9–11; trans. Thackeray, LCL)

While Josephus is acutely aware of historiographical standards of objectivity, he chooses to transgress them and openly show his own sympathies. In comparison to Philo, he expresses political rather than theological concerns. At the same time, however, it is clear that both Jewish writers strongly identify with their people and adopt a pro-Roman attitude. In the above passage Josephus expresses deep concern for his country and also praises Titus, who is, in his view, not responsible for the destruction of the temple,

which was instead provoked by the Jewish rebels. Philo in turn praises Tiberius as well as his predecessor Augustus as exemplary Roman emperors, who respected Jewish privileges throughout the Empire (*Legat.* 143–161). Both Philo and Josephus emerge as upper-class Jews, who trust the Roman administration, while criticizing those countrymen, usually of lower social status, who have taken up weapons against Rome. Both faced serious conflicts between Rome and the Jewish population of their home cities, trying to overcome them by a mediating position. Both moreover believed that divine providence proved their interpretation of contemporary politics to be the right one.

When describing the crisis in Alexandria under Gaius, Josephus and Philo set different tones. For Josephus, it is a matter of “civil strife,” while Philo speaks of the inherent hatred of the Egyptians towards the Jews (*Ant.* 18.257; *Flac.* 29). In Josephus’s account, King Agrippa I plays a crucial role, as he is Gaius’s friend from early youth and thus manages to dissuade the emperor from setting up his image in the Jerusalem temple (*Ant.* 18.292). Philo, on the other hand, ignores Agrippa’s friendship with Gaius, whom he describes as utterly insane, and instead presents the Jewish king in a highly touching, but ultimately ineffective outburst of emotions (*Legat.* 14–8; 324; 276–329).

Other differences emerge between Josephus and Philo as contemporary historians. Josephus, for example, adopts a more Roman attitude towards the emperor Tiberius, expressing the frustration of the Roman senators, while Philo adopts a more distinctly provincial perspective. Despite all these differences of detail and overall orientation, it remains clear that both Josephus and Philo aimed at writing an historical account of the events in which they participated. They were aware of their own partiality and explicitly mention their metaphysical aims of writing. In comparison to the Roman philosopher, Seneca, for example, who peppered his treatises with historical examples, Philo composed a consecutive narrative telling the story. In this crucial respect he resembles Josephus more than his contemporary Seneca and deserves to be studied in the context of the Jewish historian in Rome.

8.4 Roman Stoicism in the Works of Josephus and Philo

From early on, Roman intellectuals had admired Greek culture and philosophy. In the first century B.C.E., Cicero translated and explained vast amounts of Greek philosophy, carefully distinguishing the different schools of thought. As a result, Roman literature has often been considered a mere reservoir of Greek ideas, transmitting precious sources without adding much

original thought. This view, however, is mistaken and needs to be revised. Roman intellectuals carefully selected their Greek sources and eventually developed a specific form of Roman Stoicism, which became influential in the Greek East (Sedley 2003). While Alexandria was traditionally oriented towards Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, paying little attention to the Stoics, Rome became a center of Stoicism. The Stoic thinker Panaetius was especially influential here, eclipsing earlier Stoics, such as the highly controversial Chrysippus (Reydams-Schils 2005; Sorabji 2006, 121–132, 157–171). Philo's contemporary Seneca became a renowned Latin philosopher, who offered the world an appealing therapy of the soul (Inwood 2003).

The effect of Roman Stoicism can easily be traced in Philo's writings, because he transferred the center of his activity from Alexandria to Rome. In his earlier Alexandrian works, Philo embraced numerous Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, whereas, in his later writings, Stoic motifs dominate (Niehoff 2010). His move to Rome evidently coincided with a move towards Stoic philosophy and specifically to a branch of Stoicism that had developed in Rome. It is highly significant that such motifs from Roman Stoicism later resurface in Josephus's work.

A good example of Philo and Josephus sharing Stoic motifs popular in Rome is the creation of the cosmos. While the creation played hardly any role in Philo's early Alexandrian works, it became a central theme in his later *Exposition*. Philo now explains that "the Father and Maker of the world was in the truest sense also its Lawgiver," so that he who observes the laws follows Nature and receives the rewards outlined in the history of the forefathers (*Mos.* 2.48; trans. Colson, LCL). Philo moreover derives from the creation a list of five "dogmas" (*Opif.* 172). Moses, he insists, teaches that "God exists and has been [from eternity]," that God is one, that the world is one and created rather than eternal and is providentially cared for by God (*Opif.* 170–172). Each of these articles of "piety" echoes Stoic theology.

Diogenes Laertius's summary of Stoic theology provides an important point of reference. Theology is self-evidently discussed as part of cosmology, Nature being the starting point of man's understanding of the gods. According to Diogenes, the Stoics distinguished between matter and active reason, identifying the latter with God "for he is everlasting and the artificer of each several thing throughout the whole extent of matter" (Diog. Laert. 7.134; trans. Hicks, LCL). This "dogma" is said to be embraced by a great variety of Stoics (Diog. Laert. 7:134). Diogenes moreover reports that the Stoics consider God to be "one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus" (Diog. Laert. 7.135; trans. Hicks, LCL). The one God is said to be the "seminal reason of the cosmos," creating the elements, and, most importantly, the only deity surviving the ever recurring destructions of the world.

The connection between monotheism and the creation of the cosmos is thus

self-evident from a Stoic point of view. The creator God is the only everlasting, true deity, because He is not subject to the destruction of the world, but recreates everything from within Himself, while the other gods are merely aspects of him (Frede 2010). When Philo in the *Exposition* insists on the importance of the creation for grasping the existence and uniqueness of God, he embraces a thoroughly Stoic doctrine. To be sure, Philo did not embrace the Stoic notion of recurrent destructions of the world, but in this respect, too, he was in very good company with Roman Stoics, who had also abandoned this idea. Philo even praises Panaetius, the Stoic most influential in Rome, for entertaining the idea of a permanently existing world (*Aet.* 76).

Philo's interpretation of Abraham confirms his creation theology. He presents this patriarch as watching the sky and recognizing one divine force holding everything together:

He [Abraham] discerned what he had not seen before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work, assuming the charge and superintendence of that work and of all such parts of it as are worthy of the divine care.

(*Abr.* 70; trans. Colson, LCL)

Philo's interpretation of the creation and Abraham's role as philosopher participates in a Roman discourse on the philosophy of religions, which had been initiated by Varro. Accepting Stoic notions about the existence of philosophical knowledge among ancients, Varro interpreted Roman religion as an expression of philosophical truth recognized by earlier generations (van Nuffelen 2010). Varro stressed the philosophical value of Roman religion, while at the same time offering a broad comparative perspective. Not only Greek mystery cults were acknowledged as expressions of ancient wisdom, but also Jewish worship was appreciated for its lack of images (Aug., *De civ. D.* 4:31). Varro was even known to have "considered the God of the Jews to be the same as Jupiter" (Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1, 22:30; Stern 1974, 72b, 209–210), assuming one divine essence, despite the difference in name.

This atmosphere of tolerance changed in the aftermath of the ethnic violence in Alexandria. Chaeremon, the Stoic philosopher and probably a member of the Egyptian embassy to Gaius, applied Varronian notions to the Egyptian religion, while excluding the Jews from ancient wisdom. According to the extant fragments, he stressed that the Egyptian priests are philosophers, spending all their time in the temples and devoting "their whole life to the contemplation and vision of the divine" (Van der Horst 1984, fragm. 10). Whereas they occupy themselves with the statues of the gods, they do not engage in "empty gesture," but pursue "philosophical truth" (Van der Horst 1984, fragm. 10). The Egyptian priests moreover recognize the elements of the physical world in their ancient traditions and are eager to investigate "the

nature and causes of all things and the order of the stars” (Van der Horst 1984, fragm. 6–7, 11). Offering an alternative to Chaeremon’s Egyptian priests, Philo insists that the true philosophers are the Jews, whose scriptures convey a rational concept of religion. Moses presented an accurate account of the creation of the world, which corresponds to contemporary Stoic notions in Rome, and Abraham is said to be a philosopher *par excellence*.

A generation later, Josephus engages in a strikingly similar discussion on the creation of the world. He treats theology under the typically Stoic category of “physiology,” distinguishing it from history and law (*Ant.* 1.18–19). He moreover explains that Moses deemed it necessary “first to study the nature of God” (*Ant.* 1.19; trans. Thackeray, LCL) by introducing his work with a story “on God and the construction of the cosmos” (*Ant.* 1.21). Like Philo, Josephus assumes that the creation is a key to theology. For him, too, the creation account teaches that “God the Father of all and Lord who beholds all things grants to those following him a blissful life” (*Ant.* 1.20).

Josephus urges his readers to recognize the philosophical value of studying the Jewish scriptures. Stressing that “nothing will appear unreasonable,” Josephus anticipates philosophically-minded readers, who may be disappointed by the mythological nature of the biblical stories. Such implied readers were apparently non-Jewish intellectuals, as the following remarks indicate:

I entreat those who will read these books to focus their minds on God and to examine our lawgiver, namely whether he had a worthy conception of his nature and always attributed to him actions worthy of his power, keeping his speech about him pure of that unseemly mythology current among others.

(*Ant.* 1.15; trans. Thackeray, LCL)

Josephus appeals here to non-Jewish readers, whom he asks to judge the philosophical level of “our” lawgiver. While offering basically the same interpretation of the creation account as Philo, Josephus expresses more clearly a sense of being exposed to a “market situation” in Rome. He directly addresses readers whom he expects to compare different religions and openly declares his aim of winning them over to his side. While not engaging in missionary activity, he wishes to convince his readers of the philosophical value of his particular tradition. Josephus would have been delighted if his readers held Judaism in such high esteem as Varro had done.

Josephus’s interpretation of Abraham confirms our picture. Of “ready intelligence” and “not mistaken in his inferences” (*Ant.* 1.154; trans. Thackeray, LCL), Abraham is presented as a reformer of religion, who introduced monotheistic creation theology to mankind:

Hence he [Abraham] began to have loftier notions of virtue than others and

determined to innovate and dramatically change the universally held conception concerning God. He was thus the first who dared to declare that the creator of the universe is one and, if any other being contributed to the welfare of man, each did so by his command and not in virtue of its own power. He inferred these notions from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of the sun and the moon and from the celestial phenomena. Were these endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but since they lack this last, it is manifest that they do not even render those services, which are for our benefit, by cooperating on their own authority, but rather by the power of the One who commands them. Therefore it is appropriate to render homage and thanksgiving only to him.

(*Ant.* 1.155–156; adapted from Thackeray, LCL)

Josephus's Abraham thinks in terms of Stoic Nature theology, inferring one divine power from the beneficial organization of the cosmos. He moreover stresses the aspect of monotheism, insisting that reverence and worship are becoming only to the demiurge. Josephus's language is highly competitive. His Abraham was the very first to prove God's existence and uniqueness, "innovating and dramatically changing the universally held conception concerning God." The Jewish religion emerges not only as compatible with rational theology, but as its very cradle. Abraham's novel message of monotheism was indeed so demanding that "the Chaldeans and the other peoples of Mesopotamia rose against him" (*Ant.* 1.157; trans. Thackeray, LCL).

Josephus inserts the motif of *stasis* into the narrative of Abraham. He expresses his awareness that the Jewish religion is controversial, at times even challenged and directly attacked. Josephus's own situation in Rome immediately comes to mind. Did he project the conflict with Greco-Egyptian writers, such as Apion and Chaeremon, onto Abraham and his contemporaries? Such a tendency is visible in the following remarks about Abraham's encounter with the Egyptian priests:

[Abraham was ready to go to Egypt] in order to hear what their priests had to say about the gods. If he found their views superior to his, he would follow them, or else, if his views proved the better, he would change theirs for the better ... Since the Egyptians indulge in different customs and disparage each other's practices and consequently have become enemies of each other, Abraham conversed with each party and exposed the arguments adduced in favor of their particular vanity and showed that they contained nothing true.

(*Ant.* 1.161–166)

Sending Abraham down to Egypt for a discussion on religion, Josephus seems to appeal to readers, who may already have read the works of Apion and

Chaeremon and are now ready for a comparison of the different traditions. Josephus's presentation is remarkably objective, taking into account the possibility that the Egyptians are found superior. This scenario reflects, of course, good philosophical practice, which is inherently open to all options. Josephus presents in a similar way his own choice of one Jewish sect among those available in his youth (*Life* 7–12; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). Yet there seems to be more at stake. Josephus suggests that, objectively speaking, the Jewish religion is of higher philosophical value than its Egyptian counterpart. The reader is invited to follow Abraham and recognize the inferiority of the Egyptian priests.

In the field of philosophy, too, Josephus and Philo thus emerge as participants in a similar Roman discourse. Both engage Stoic arguments of nature theology in order to offer a rational interpretation of the biblical creation account. Both present the Jewish religion to a broader audience, hoping to be more convincing than their Greco-Egyptian counterparts.

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CHAPTER 9

Josephus and the New Testament

Helen K. Bond

9.1 Introduction

Our most important non-biblical source for interpreting the New Testament (NT) texts is without doubt Flavius Josephus. At first glance, this might seem a little odd: Josephus was barely aware of Christianity and his remarkable energies were directed towards explaining and commending his own Jewish faith to Roman readers. Yet he was born in 37 C.E.—only a few years after the death of Jesus, about the same time that the life of Saul of Tarsus was changed forever on the Damascus road, and the same year that Pontius Pilate and the high priest Caiaphas were dismissed from office. The movement that would one day become Christianity began, of course, as a Jewish phenomenon, and its initial history is integrally connected with that of the Palestinian Jewish setting from which it emerged. Josephus's lengthy works provide an invaluable account of this history, the political and religious climate of the day, and many of the people and places referred to in the NT texts.

Furthermore, Josephus embarked on his writing career in the period 70–100 C.E., precisely the time that the canonical gospels were being composed. Although there are clearly important differences between Josephus's works and the gospels, the parallels are instructive: all were to some extent a response to the fall of Jerusalem and its temple, all chose to express their theological convictions in largely narrative form, and all employed a range of sources and contemporary rhetorical assumptions. As long as Josephus is used with caution (and this is a point we shall return to many times below), his work is of unparalleled importance to NT interpreters.

This chapter will discuss Josephus and the NT under three headings. First, we shall examine his contribution towards an understanding of the first-century Jewish world from which the Christian movement emerged. The recent rise of interest in the historical Jesus has ensured that this continues to be an area of particularly intense scholarly research. Second, we shall look at what Josephus says about specific characters known to us from the Christian tradition; we shall see that the Jerusalem aristocrat's use of characters can be extremely fluid, taking on different traits as the needs of the narrative required. Finally, we shall look more generally at the similarities between Josephus's works and the NT texts, particularly the Gospel of Luke, which

exhibits the closest connections.

9.2 The Jewish World of the First Century

The *Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities* provide detailed accounts of events in Palestine between 200 B.C.E. and the mid–late first century C.E. As far as NT scholars are concerned, this is the crucial period for understanding Jesus and the movement which followed him. Josephus’s record is made all the more important by the fact that other accounts have not survived (we might well lament the loss of most of Nicolaus of Damascus’s *Universal History* which culminated in the reign of Herod I, or Justus of Tiberius’s account of the war with Rome). Although intertestamental literature occasionally covers some of the same material (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees on the early Hasmonaeans), for much of this period, Josephus is our only witness. How, then, should we use his record?

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a particular interest in what was popularly known as NT “background.” Large volumes were produced with sections on Jewish history, beliefs, Law, and customs. A particularly influential example was the work of Emil Schürer, which was first published in the 1880s and subsequently revised by a team of Oxford scholars between 1973 and 1986. A great deal of the material contained in the three volumes was drawn from Josephus, though the degree of dependence on the Jewish author was not always made clear. It was simply assumed that Josephus was a reliable guide not only to broader political events but also to the inner motives and feelings of the characters he described. The prevailing view saw Josephus not as a creative author but as a compiler of sources; where events were presented differently in the *Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities*, it was assumed that this was due to dependence on different sources, which had simply been incorporated in roughly their original form by a rather sloppy author. The great advantage of this approach was that it gave the illusion of dealing with two different sources—one preserved in the *Jewish War*, and another in the *Jewish Antiquities*—which could then be compared and evaluated. This is the method adopted by E. Mary Smallwood in her important study of *The Jews under Roman Rule* (1976). While she recognized Josephus’s own personal bias, Smallwood’s practice was systematically to work through the parallel accounts, deciding at each stage which one appeared to be most historically credible.

More recent studies of NT “background” have been informed by newer approaches to Josephus in which he is regarded as an intelligent and creative author who adapts his sources (often quite considerably) in the service of his broader apologetic points (Rajak 1983; Bilde 1988; Mason 1998). When contradictions arise between the *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, appeal is

no longer automatically made to different sources (although Josephus clearly availed himself of a range of works and memoirs; see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz on *Jewish Antiquities* in this volume). Instead, questions revolve around *why* Josephus presented events in a particular way and how a specific scene fits into the wider aims of the individual work as a whole. Thus, while the works of Sanders (1992), Grabbe (2004), and Jensen (2006) are still heavily dependent on Josephus, they show a much more cautious use of their major source. Working out the precise extent of Josephus's bias, however, is far from simple. Sanders (1992) argues that he is most reliable when he describes events and least reliable in his interpretations and narrative asides; others, however, are more skeptical of the whole enterprise (see McLaren 1998 and Mason 2009).

Perhaps the best way to proceed is through examples. We shall look first at ways in which Josephus illustrates the gospel record in a fairly straightforward manner. Of the many cases which could be cited here, I shall limit the discussion to just four:

1. As an inhabitant of Jerusalem, Josephus was well acquainted with the geographical locations of many of the gospel narratives. He provides us with a useful first-hand account of Galilee (*War* 3.35–43), of Jerusalem and its temple (Levine 2002; *Ant.* 15.380–423), and Jewish festivals as they were practiced in the first century (on Passover, for example, see Colautti 2002).
2. Josephus's description of the division of the kingdom on Herod I's death in 4 B.C.E. and the subsequent banishment of Archelaus (*War* 2.1–118; *Ant.* 17.317–320, 342–355) explains the otherwise puzzling situation described by the gospels in which Galilee was ruled by Antipas (correctly titled tetrarch in Luke 3.1) while Judea in the south became an imperial province governed by a Roman prefect. Josephus describes the census taken at the inauguration of the province in 6 C.E. by the Syrian legate Quirinius (found also at Luke 2.1–5), though clearly the enrolment was not a worldwide affair involving a return to ancestral homes, as Luke suggests, but simply an attempt to calculate levels of Judean taxation in the new Roman province.
3. From Josephus, too, we learn that the Roman governor generally resided in the coastal city of Caesarea Maritima in the northwest of the province, relocating to Jerusalem only during the festivals when security was a particular concern. Thus, it was that Jesus was easily brought before Pilate who was in Jerusalem for the Passover, but Paul, who was apprehended some time after the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), had to be escorted by armed guard to Felix who had now returned to Caesarea (Acts 23.23–24).
4. Finally, Josephus helps us to understand the gospels' "chief priests"

(see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume on Josephus and the priesthood). While the office of High Priest had originally been hereditary and for life, he notes that Herod I took it upon himself to appoint and depose high priests at will, a practice continued by Rome from 6 C.E. onwards (*Ant.* 17.231, 20.247–251). This led to an unprecedented situation in which former High Priests and their families remained in Jerusalem, forming the group referred to in the gospels as “chief priests” (the Greek word is simply the plural of High Priest). It is clear that former incumbents continued to be known as “High Priest” (*War* 2.243, 441; *Ant.* 18.34, 95, 20.205; *Life* 193), presumably as a term of respect, and both Luke and John refer to Annas (Ananus I) in this way (Luke 3.2, Acts 4.6, John 18.19, 22) even though the actual High Priest was now Caiaphas (John 18.24; *Ant.* 18.35, 95).

In all of these cases, information from Josephus has helped to fill out the narratives of the gospels and Acts, and puzzling aspects of the Christian story begin to make sense in a Jewish Palestinian setting. It is hardly surprising that biblical dictionaries and gospel commentaries are replete with references to Josephus. In other cases, however, the use of Josephus is much more difficult, and I shall illustrate this with just two examples: Josephus’s presentation of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and his views on first-century messianic beliefs.

1. Josephus should, in theory, have been very well informed regarding the Pharisees and Sadducees (see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). He spent time learning about both Jewish groups in his youth (along with the Essenes and a desert ascetic named Bannus, *Life* 10–12). Yet his exceedingly short descriptions are not nearly as helpful as we might have hoped (*War* 2.162–166; *Ant.* 13.171–173, 18.11–23). As Mason (2003) explains, Josephus presented the various Jewish groups as “philosophical schools” designed to appeal to his Roman readers; he discusses their attitude towards fate and immortality of the soul, and presents an idealized portrait of a time-honored and variegated Jewish faith against which the rebels appear as renegades and deviants. From Josephus’s narratives we can establish that the Pharisees were influential and highly respected in Jewish society (*Ant.* 18.15); that they had a reputation for accurate interpretation of both the Law and their own traditions (*Ant.* 13.297), but were often troublesome to those in power. Sadducees, in contrast, enjoyed little popular support (*Ant.* 13.298), even though they were men of the highest standing (*Ant.* 18.17); the basis of their teaching is said to be the Torah alone (*Ant.* 18.16), and they had a reputation for being harsh in judgment (*Ant.* 20.199). Providing his readers with accurate descriptions of Jewish groups was not one of Josephus’s aims, and it is clear that much is missing from his accounts. How, precisely, could the Sadducees have lived their lives only in accordance with the first five books of the

Bible? Surely their first-century urban setting made demands on them that were not adequately covered by the Pentateuch? And why is there no reference to Pharisaic activity between the death of Herod and the outbreak of the revolt? Had Pharisaic power waned (as scholars often suppose), or did Josephus simply have no reason to add any of their activities to his scanty narrative at this point?

2. Despite its shortcomings, however, Josephus's account is still useful. The apostle Paul was a Pharisee (Philippians 3.5) and though he says remarkably little about the group, he agrees with Josephus regarding the importance of the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1.14; see also Mark 7.3). In the gospels, too, Pharisees are clearly regarded as the leading religious authorities by ordinary people. They are shown disputing with Jesus over issues of Law observance, particularly Sabbath, food laws, tithing, and purity. While Josephus says nothing about these specific interests (presumably in deference to his Roman readers), the Pharisees' concern for legal interpretation would naturally focus on such areas. The fact that the Sadducees appear only in Jerusalem also coheres with Josephus's claim that they were drawn from the upper echelons of society, and their dismissal of resurrection and angels presumably derives from the centrality of the Pentateuch in their estimation (Mark 12.18–27; Acts 4.1–4, 23.6–10).
3. On a broader level, Josephus's use of the Pharisees and the Sadducees almost as characters within his drama has certain parallels with the evangelists' use of the Jewish leaders. It is generally agreed, for example, that the gospel writers have enhanced opposition between Jesus and the Jewish authorities—a process which has gone furthest in the Fourth Gospel, where Jesus' historical opponents have been subsumed under a general heading of “the Jews,” signifying those who reject Jesus and symbolically align themselves with darkness and disbelief (Bieringer et al. 2001). We cannot simply find the “historical Pharisees/Sadducees” in Josephus, any more than we can do the same in the gospels. Only when all the references are read in context and with an appropriate awareness of individual bias is any kind of synthesis possible (for a range of attempts to take all the evidence into consideration, see Neusner and Chilton 2007).
4. A second example of the complexity of Josephus concerns messianic beliefs in the first century. Readers of the NT are, of course, particularly interested in ancient messianic hopes and the prophetic or kingly leaders who claimed to embody them. Contemporary literature attests a lively and widespread interest in such matters, attested by the *Testament of Levi* 17–18 or the *Psalms of Solomon* 17. Josephus, however, has nothing whatsoever to say regarding messianic hopes. The omission is hardly surprising: he would not have wanted to admit

to his Roman readers that many Jews longed for a future figure who would defeat Israel's enemies and help to establish the glorious reign of God. He does, however, mention several kingly or prophetic figures who emerged throughout the first century. Some of these are alluded to in Acts: Theudas and Judas (Acts 5.35–37) and the Egyptian (Acts 21.38). Of particular interest are the so-called “sign prophets” who emerged in the 50s C.E. (a group which includes Theudas and the Egyptian). It is clear that Josephus detests these men, referring to them as *goês* (charlatan) and false prophets, and the depth of his scorn makes any reconstruction of their aims and promises difficult in the extreme (*War* 2.258–265; *Ant.* 20.97–98, 160–188). They provide an interesting example, however, of “reading against the grain” in Josephus. Despite his contempt, it is clear that they attracted large crowds and modeled themselves on prophetic figures from Israel's past (specifically Moses and Joshua), invoking the exile and nostalgia for a time when Israel was closer to its God. Beyond the Jerusalem aristocrat's disdain, it is possible to discern a deep longing within first-century Jewish society for earlier biblical times and an enthusiasm for redeemer figures. These conclusions provide an important context for understanding the appeal of men like Jesus and John the Baptist earlier in the century (Gray 1993; Barnett 2005).

So far we have looked in fairly general terms at the ways in which Josephus can be used—sometimes against his will—to reconstruct the first-century world of Jesus and the early Christian documents. In the next section we shall turn our attention to specific named individuals known to us from the gospel tradition.

9.3 Named Characters in the Gospels and Acts

Many characters familiar from the NT are *unsympathetic* or even antagonistic to the Christian message. The Herodian family, for example, is described at length by Josephus, and several members of the dynasty play a role in the Christian drama: Herod I; his sons Archelaus, Philip and Antipas (the latter is particularly prominent in Luke); his grandson Agrippa I (the ‘Herod’ who persecuted the church in Acts 12.1–4 and suffered for it in Acts 12.20–23); and his great-grandchildren Agrippa II and Berenice (who heard Paul in Acts 25.13–26.32). One of Josephus's subsidiary aims in the *Jewish Antiquities* was to provide a full list of Jewish high priests (*Ant.* 20.224–251; presumably he had a source at his disposal here; see Chapter 2 by Schwartz in this volume). He mentions the two high priests known from the NT, Ananus I (Annas) and Caiaphas, but although his works allow us to set dates for their time of office (roughly 6–15 and 18–37 C.E. respectively), no details of either

man are supplied. Roman governors, too, play their role in Josephus's narrative, including Pontius Pilate (the prefect who authorized Jesus' execution) and Felix and Festus (who tried Paul).

While all of these characters help to situate earliest Christianity within its first-century context (and, to some extent, guarantee the broadly historical character of the gospel record), once again caution is necessary. Characters are used by Josephus in the service of his major apologetic points. He is not interested in providing his readers with "accurate" character sketches (even if such a thing might be possible); rather, characters are shaped and molded by the requirements of his rhetoric.

Herod I, for example, is used in the *Jewish War* as a prime illustration of a Jew who was supremely loyal to Rome; the famous king's pro-Roman politics are exploited to the full in Josephus's contention that Jews in general were ready to accept Roman rule (see [Chapter 14](#) by van Henten in this volume). The account is remarkably positive towards the king, includes an enthusiastic encomium (*War* 1.429–430), and admits to the disintegration of Herod and his family only in the final section of the narrative. The *Jewish Antiquities*, however, has a different set of concerns. Now the king is cast not so much as an example of Jewish loyalty but as a tyrannical ruler and impious Jew whose disastrous domestic life and gruesome death were the just deserts of his impiety. Josephus provides us with a mass of material, but excavating the "real Herod" from it all is far from easy. He certainly had sources at his disposal (specifically that of Herod's adviser, Nicolaus of Damascus, *Ant.* 14.9, 16.183–186), yet the bias and narrative shaping permeate the accounts too deeply to allow any simplistic notions of "peeling back" the rhetoric to provide an historical kernel. What Josephus's works provide are not "historical portraits" against which the NT characters can be compared and evaluated, but a set of alternative rhetorical uses of characters that throw the procedures of the NT writers into relief. Thus, Herod is cast by Matthew as a second Pharaoh (Matt. 2.16–18; Exod. 1–2), a presentation that strengthens this evangelist's portrayal of Jesus as a new Moses. Whether the "massacre of the innocents" happened historically is impossible to verify (it is not mentioned in Josephus's detailed account of Herod's final years). The historicity of the accounts, however—for both Josephus and the evangelists—is of secondary interest to the theological and rhetorical convictions they wish to convey (for a sensitive handling of the Herod material, see Richardson 1996).

Pontius Pilate provides a second example. The *Jewish War* contains two stories from his prefecture: one in which he caused an outcry by bringing standards into the Antonia Fortress in Jerusalem, and another in which he provoked a riot by using money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct (*War* 2.169–177). In both accounts, Pilate's activities are narrated briefly and the main interest of the stories lies in the Jewish reaction. In the

first one, a non-violent passive protest achieves its goal, while in the second, a riot descends into bloodshed and large numbers of fatalities. The stories perfectly illustrate the *Jewish War*'s point that peaceful protests will prevail (such as that occasioned by the Caligula crisis in 40 C.E.) while riots and the resort to violence are futile (illustrated, on a much larger scale, by the Jewish War itself). It is quite clear that Josephus's presumably wide-ranging information about Pilate has been tailored to the concerns of his narrative. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, these are rather different. The Pilate material is much longer (there are four incidents now, rather than two, and the cycle ends with Pilate's removal from the province, *Ant.* 18.55–89). The *Jewish Antiquities* displays an interest in personalities and their piety (or lack of it) and in this work Pilate is cast as an opponent of the Jewish Law. He plays his part in the general disintegration of the province into revolt, a theme which receives much greater analysis in the *Jewish Antiquities* than in the earlier volume. Once again, the "real" Pilate is difficult to disentangle from all of this. We can piece together a handful of events from his term of office, but we should be especially wary of trusting Josephus's analysis of his character and motivations.

The same is true of the NT which furnishes us with four different portraits of Pilate. While the Pilates of Mark and John are often nowadays read as harsh characters, bullying the people into taking responsibility for Jesus' death, Matthew seems to have little interest in the governor, and Luke's Pilate comes over as weak and ineffectual. The latter makes little sense historically, but fits perfectly with Luke's attempt to exonerate Rome in the death of Jesus and his insistence that Jesus was innocent under Roman law. (On the various gospel portrayals, see Rensberger 1988; Bond 1998; and Carter 2003.) Once again, we should be wary of accepting any of these as "accurate" portraits. In precisely the same manner as Josephus, the evangelists have shaped a minor character—clearly quite considerably—in the interests of their christological and political interests.

A second group of characters is associated with the Christian movement itself: John the Baptist, Jesus, and his brother James (often known as "the Just"). The presence of these characters in the *Jewish Antiquities* was of course one of the reasons why the work was preserved by the Early Church Fathers. We shall look at two of these, John and Jesus, and see how Josephus's testimony interacts with that of the gospels. We begin with the paragraph relating to John the Baptist:

But to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to live righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view, this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be

acceptable to God. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behaviour. When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake. Though John, because of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus, the stronghold that we have previously mentioned, and there put to death, yet the verdict of the Jews was that the destruction visited upon Herod's army was a vindication of John, since God saw fit to inflict such a blow on Herod.

(*Ant.* 18.116–119; trans. Feldman, LCL)

Josephus seems to share the generally positive opinion of John held by his contemporaries, noting that several of his fellow Jews regarded the destruction of Antipas's army by King Aretas of Nabataea in 36 C.E. as divine retribution for his execution of the prophet. Like the evangelists, he regards baptism as John's most striking activity and links it with a call for inner cleansing. While the evangelists are quite clear that John's baptism was for the remission of sins, however (Mark 1.4//Luke 3.3; Matt. 3.14–15), Josephus is equally adamant that baptism had no atoning function. Perhaps, as a priest, he was unable to accept that anything other than sacrifice in the temple could atone for sin; or perhaps the Baptist was not entirely clear or consistent on this point. (For modern scholarly discussion, compare Taylor 1997 with Webb 1991.) Josephus omits a number of other features known from the gospels: the apocalyptic dimension of John's message, his promise of a "Mighty One" (Mark 1.7–8), and his location by the highly symbolic River Jordan. None of this would have endeared the Jewish prophet to a Roman audience and so was quietly dropped.

John's death is presented differently by Josephus, but is still broadly compatible with the synoptic gospels. Mark and Matthew claim that John was arrested because he criticized Antipas's unlawful marriage to Herodias (Mark 6.17//Matt. 14.3—see *Ant.* 18.110, 336 for details). Later on, at Antipas's birthday party, Herodias persuaded her daughter to dance for the tetrarch who, entranced at her performance, publicly offered her whatever she desired. After consulting her mother, the girl asked for the Baptist's head, and Antipas had no choice but to comply. The story has a legendary air and is reminiscent of both the tales of Esther and Jezebel's hatred of Elijah, but the central claim that John criticized Antipas's marriage may well be true. Quite apart from the illegality of the union (Herodias's first husband was still alive: Lev. 18.16,

20.21), the divorce of Aretas's daughter was a politically dangerous move and Antipas would not have wanted a popular holy man drawing attention to it. The fact that popular sentiment connected Antipas's defeat by Aretas with his treatment of John may also suggest a link. These considerations fill out Josephus's claim that Antipas worried that John's following might lead to insurrection, and his determination to nip the movement in the bud before trouble erupted.

A second and more important passage is Josephus's famous description of Jesus, known by its Latin title, the *Testimonium Flavianum*. The account runs as follows:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed one ought to call him a man*. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. *He was the Messiah*. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. *On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvellous things about him*. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

(*Ant.* 18.63–64; trans. Feldman, LCL)

Josephus was not a Christian and it is highly unlikely that he could have written this passage as it now stands (see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). While some have argued that the whole paragraph is an insertion, it seems more likely that it has simply been altered by Christian copyists. At a later point in the same work, Josephus refers to “the brother of Jesus who is called the Christ” (*Ant.* 20.20), a phrase that seems to suggest that he had referred to Jesus earlier in the work (that is, at this point). Origen, writing about 280 C.E., stated quite explicitly that Josephus did not believe Jesus to be the Christ, a view he surely could not have held had he known this paragraph in its present form (*C. Cels.* 1.47; *Commentary on Matthew* 13.55). By about 324, however, Eusebius knew the passage as we have it (*Church History* 1.11.8), suggesting that it was altered some time around 300 C.E. (on Eusebius's use of Josephus, see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki in this volume). Unfortunately, our earliest manuscripts of Josephus date to the eleventh century and there is little chance of ever finding an “untampered” manuscript (see [Chapter 20](#) by Leoni in this volume).

But how far did the scribes go in their rewriting of this paragraph? A widely held view nowadays is that Christian alterations may have been fairly minimal. Once the more explicitly Christian passages are omitted (the ones in italics above), the remainder of the text may well go back to Josephus. The language generally is Josephan and there are some features that would seem

unlikely to have come from a Christian scribe, for example, the reference to Jesus winning over both Jews and gentiles during his lifetime (would a Christian make such a mistake?) and the reference to Christians as a “tribe” (*phylon*). It is also possible, of course, that later editors have *omitted* sections (see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz in this volume). The context of the paragraph is a series of tumults in the time of Pontius Pilate, and Josephus’s larger point is to show that upheaval beset both Palestine and even Rome itself at this period. The original version may well have included an account of a riot (perhaps the incident in the temple?), which was quietly deleted. The description, however, could not have been too hostile towards Jesus, otherwise it is difficult to account for Josephus’s popularity among early Christians. In all probability Josephus’s attitude was fairly neutral, not dissimilar perhaps to his assessment of John the Baptist which, as we have seen, is broadly neutral to positive.

The *Testimonium Flavianum* has become particularly prominent lately among researchers of the historical Jesus. The general consensus, however, is that while Josephus reinforces certain aspects of the gospel record, his account adds little that is new. (For a full discussion, see Vermès 1987; Meier 1990; van Voorst 2000; Carleton Paget 2001.)

So far, then, we have seen that a careful use of Josephus can be a tremendous resource for filling out both the first-century Jewish context and pictures of certain individuals familiar from the Christian tradition. We have seen too that both Josephus and the evangelists have a tendency to shape minor characters (or groups of characters) in the interests of their narratives. In the final section, we shall look at wider literary links between Josephus and the NT texts.

9.4 Broader Connections between Josephus and the New Testament Authors

There are a number of very basic connections between Josephus and the NT authors. Most obvious, perhaps, is the fact that both wrote *koine* Greek for largely gentile audiences. Josephus’s relatively lengthy works provide a useful body of material with which to compare the Greek terms used by the NT authors. In seeking to understand what a particular writer meant by a word or phrase, then, it is common for NT researchers to look at how the terms are used by Josephus (computer resources or Rengsdorf’s 1973–1983 concordance are invaluable in this regard). Similarly, both Josephus and the NT authors were heirs to the Jewish scriptures, and Josephus’s lengthy retelling of the tradition in the first half of *Jewish Antiquities* (part of a larger contemporary interest in rewriting the Bible) gives an indication of how some of the stories were interpreted in the late first century (see Feldman 1998; and

[Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). The NT authors tend to use their sacred writings differently—quoting, alluding, or spinning stories around particular passages—but questions over which texts they used (the Septuagint? another early Greek version? a form of the Masoretic text?) are common to both. Finally, as mid-to-late first-century writers, all our authors share certain cultural assumptions, for example, those connected to women (see [Chapter 12](#) by Ilan in this volume). All know that an easy way to praise or disparage a group of people is through their women (Thurston 1998); all were aware of the rhetorical mileage which could be gained by suggesting that aristocratic Roman ladies had joined their group (Matthews 2001); and none were above blaming a woman for a man's predicament (Mark 6.19–28//Matt. 14.3–11; *Ant.* 18.240–255, *War* 2.248–249).

At a deeper level, both Josephus and the NT writers wrote from positions outside the dominant Greco-Roman culture, and all (with the exception of Paul) were responding to some extent to the fall of Jerusalem. While Josephus wrote largely for outsiders, passionately arguing for a return to a more positive assessment of his Jewish faith, the NT texts are directed towards insiders, members of the Christian community, in a bid to explain their faith, strengthen their commitment, and carve out a new and distinctive Christian identity. While Josephus takes pride in his ancestral traditions, in their antiquity and morality, Christians had a much more ambiguous relationship with their Jewish heritage, leading them sometimes to emphasize their Jewish roots (a feature of parts of the gospels of Matthew and Luke) and at other times to argue that Jewish institutions had now been superseded by Jesus (a feature of John and Hebrews). While Josephus attempted to heal post-war rifts by answering anti-Jewish slanders, Christians often sought to distance themselves from Jews, thereby inadvertently laying the foundations for much later Christian anti-Semitism (Dunn 2006).

Of all the NT authors, the one who comes closest to Josephus in terms of literary output is the author of Luke-Acts. In general terms, both authors wrote Hellenistic histories with strong links to their eastern predecessors (on the genre of each, see Sterling 1991). They provided prologues, created appropriate speeches for their characters, and endeavored to make their work entertaining and lively (shipwrecks, for example, feature in both *Life* 14–16 and Acts 27). Both, too, sought to advance the standing of their own group by stressing its antiquity and virtues: they emphasize the harmonious history of their group, suggest that trouble came from outsiders (rebels for Josephus, Jewish authorities for Luke), and show that neither group is any threat to Roman peace and stability. Beyond these similarities are matters of detail. Luke includes a reference to the census under Quirinius (Luke 2.1–13; *War* 2.117–118; *Ant.* 18.1–5), the rebels Judas and Theudas (Acts 5.37; *War* 2.258–261; *Ant.* 20.167–169), the Egyptian (Acts 21.38; *War* 2.258–261; *Ant.* 20.167–169), a description of the death of Agrippa I which has certain

similarities with that of Josephus (Acts 12.20–23; *Ant.* 19.343–361), and a note of the famine in the reign of Claudius (Acts 11.28–29; *Ant.* 3.320, 20.51–53, 101). Not surprisingly, a number of scholars have proposed a connection between the two works. Most commonly it is argued that Luke had read (or heard a performance of) part or all of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* (Burkitt 1906; Mason 2003; Pervo 2006).

The crucial point here is not that Luke and Josephus both record historical events which took place in first-century Judea—these would have been widely known and available. Rather, the intriguing fact is that Luke seems to follow Josephus’s *bias and judgment*, or to make mistakes that can be explained by Josephus’s text. So, for example, Burkitt (1906) notes that Luke dates the opening of John the Baptist’s ministry in 28/29 C.E. to the time when “Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene” (Luke 3.1). This is impossible as the tetrarch was killed by Mark Antony in 36 B.C.E. (Strabo 16.2.10). Curiously, though, Josephus refers to Abilene as the “so-called kingdom of Lysanias” (*War* 2.215; *Ant.* 20.138), and a cursory reading of these passages might give one the impression that Lysanias occupied the throne until it was added to the territory of Agrippa II in 53 C.E. A similar error may have crept into the mention of Theudas and Judas in Acts 5. It is well known that Gamaliel reverses the order of these two rebels at this point: while Judas was active at the time of the census in 6 C.E., Theudas’s activity belongs after the death of Jesus, in roughly 45 C.E. A number of explanations have been proposed by NT scholars (including the existence of another, earlier, Theudas), but an intriguing solution is the suggestion that Luke’s passage is ultimately derived from *Jewish Antiquities* 20.97–104 where the two men are similarly listed in reverse order. Once again, a reasonable inference might be that Luke had heard, and perhaps imperfectly remembered, parts of Josephus.

Luke was concerned to situate emerging Christianity within events on the world stage, and it is quite plausible that he acquainted himself with Josephus’s work (though clearly he did not use him in the careful manner in which he drew on Mark and Q). In the end, although some have strenuously argued against a link (Witherington 1998), it remains an intriguing possibility.

9.5 Conclusion

We have now seen a range of ways in which an appreciation of Josephus can help NT interpreters: illustrating the first-century context, providing further information on named characters in the Christian tradition, and in the Jewish author’s wider themes and interests. Josephus needs to be used with caution, however, in the same way that the NT texts need to be handled in a critical manner, with due regard to their literary and theological artistry and their authors’ emerging sense of cultural identity. With careful handling, then,

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FURTHER READING

Despite the importance of Josephus for understanding the NT, there are very few books that treat the theme of this chapter with any degree of detail. By far the best resource is Steve Mason’s *Josephus and the New Testament* (2003), now in its second edition. Mason discusses many of the topics in this chapter in more detail and also provides useful accounts of the life and works of Josephus.

Another valuable study is Louis H. Feldman’s article on “Josephus” in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992). This provides a clear and wide-ranging discussion of many aspects of Josephan studies specially written for people who are also interested in the biblical texts. The best guides to first-century Judea include Ed P. Sanders’s *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (1992) and Lester L. Grabbe’s *History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second*

Temple Period (2004). Both work with a sophisticated view of Josephus, and the latter includes handy bibliographies to accompany each subject.

A range of books and monographs treat individual connections between Josephus and NT writings (presentation of characters, Jewish beliefs, etc.) and can be found listed in the references that accompany this chapter.

PART III

Themes

CHAPTER 10

Josephus and the Archaeology of Galilee

Zeev Weiss

10.1 Introduction

Flavius Josephus's autobiography, *Life*, deals primarily with the life of the historian in the Galilee in the short span of time from the end of 66 C.E. until the spring of 67 C.E., and also imparts information about the demographic reality of the Galilee in the first century C.E., the nature of its population, economics, cultural patterns, and governmental order. In his *Jewish War* (3.35–58), Flavius Josephus describes Judea and its environs, but separates his brief description of Gaulanitis and Batanaea (the Golan and Bashan) from his informative account of the Galilee. In doing so, the author presents the political, demographic, and economic geography of the Galilee and its adjacent areas, but otherwise considers both areas in which he operated as one region populated by Jews. Not only does Josephus's description create a direct connection between the Jewish inhabitants of the Galilee and Golan, but the archaeological finds also point to a cultural-material connection between the two regions in the first century C.E. Therefore, any discussion pertaining to the Galilee and its population from the first century C.E. up to the Great Revolt against Rome also applies to the Jewish settlements in the Golan, even if not explicitly mentioned.

In his letter to John, Josephus mentions that he would be willing to meet him anywhere he would like in the 204 cities and villages of Galilee, except for Gabara and Gischala: “the latter being John's native place, and the former in league and alliance with him” (*Life* 235). In his books, Josephus mentions several locales by name, but we do not have the full list at our disposal. Nevertheless, a broad examination of the sites in the Galilee in which material finds attesting to settlement in the first century C.E. have been preserved provides a statistic rather close to that of Josephus. Most of the Galilean sites Josephus mentions by name are identified by the archaeological finds; the identification of several of them is doubtful, and many others in which evidence has been found for their existence in the first century C.E. are not known by name (Aviam and Richardson 2001; Ben-David 2011, 21–36).

In what follows, we will present an updated picture of the settlement in first-century Galilee. The many finds that have been discovered in the region in

recent years allow us to define more accurately the nature of the Jewish settlement there while enriching our understanding of various dimensions, such as architecture, wares and objects in daily use, burial, and art. Our discussion focuses on the material culture, but the conclusions drawn from it have many implications, not only with regard to clarifying the demographic-societal-cultural reality in the Galilee but also to tackling the larger questions that have been engaging scholars of both the Jewish and Christian societies for some time. These include, for example, the nature and composition of the local population in the first century C.E., the degree of influence that Greco-Roman culture had on the Galilee, the relationship between city and village/center and periphery, a description of Jesus' activity in the Galilee, and the *realia* behind the New Testament stories.

10.2 Rural Settlements

Most of the settlements known from the archaeological finds have a rural character reflecting daily life in the region. These settlements were built in hilly areas conforming to the Galilean topography or in low places, in the valleys and along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, at times adjacent to a natural water source. Josephus calls all the rural settlements in the Galilee *kômê*, without giving consideration to the size of the settlement or the number of inhabitants living there, and testifies that the smallest of the Galilean villages had at least 15,000 inhabitants (*War* 3.43). One should not assign much importance to Josephus's demographic statistics of the Galilee, and it is clear—based on the archaeological finds and from what Josephus writes—that the rural settlements throughout the region differed from each other. Several villages in the Galilee, Yafia, for example, stretched over a wide area and contained several thousand inhabitants, while others, small in area and population, such as nearby Nazareth, numbered only a few hundred inhabitants. No farmsteads from the Second Temple period have been discovered to date in the Galilee; what we find in each village, large and small alike, are several dwellings of a number of families. Land reserves, economic potential, and local initiative undoubtedly played a role in the size of a settlement and its population in the course of time. An examination of the structural layout, economy, and even cultural orientation of the Galilean settlements enables us to distinguish, to some degree, between the large towns and small villages, and the archaeological finds to be discussed below, barring some isolated cases, provide information about the socio-cultural identity of the different types of settlements in the region.

Quite a few archaeological excavations have been conducted at several sites throughout the Galilee containing first-century C.E. remains. Building remains were found in first-century C.E. Capernaum, including one structure

identified as St. Peter's house, which was subsequently converted into a community center and in the fifth century was covered by an octagonal church. The settlement here is rural and not especially large, its houses are simple and arranged in blocks, or *insulae* (Corbo 1971, 263–285; Loffreda 1993, 37–67). At nearby Bethsaida, several simple courtyard houses from the first century C.E. were discovered, and in one of them fishing gear was found, indicating the livelihood of the house's inhabitants (Arav 1999, 89). In Nazareth, very few remains were discovered; parts of walls or agricultural installations indicate the occupation of the local inhabitants; on the periphery of the settlement several first-century C.E. burial caves were discovered (Bagatti 1993, III 1103–1105). The identification of Cana/Qana is debatable (Aviam and Richardson 2001, 184). Some identify it with Karm er-Ras, which lies on the western outskirts of modern-day Kafr Kana, about 5 km northeast of Nazareth, where the remains of buildings, courtyards, and agricultural installations, as well as ritual baths and stone vessels belonging to the early settlement, were found (Figure 10.1; Alexandre 2008, 73–79). Others think that it should be identified with Horvat Qana, north of the Bet Netofah Valley, where the remains of terraced dwellings, several industrial installations, isolated ritual baths, and stone vessels were discovered on the slope of the hill, indicating Jewish presence at the site in the first century C.E. (Edwards 2002, 101–132; Richardson 2006, 120–135). In the excavation of Kefar Hananyah and in the survey of Shikhin, it appears that already in the first century C.E. there were workshops operating at two sites, each specializing in the production of a certain type of pottery ware that was sold throughout Jewish Galilee (Strange et al. 1994, 216–227; 1995, 171–187; Adan-Bayewitz 1993, 235–243). To these should be added sporadic finds discovered, for example, in Bet She'arim, Meiron, Merot, and Gush Halav; however, the remains from these sites and others are few and it is difficult to distinguish between the first-century C.E. and later material, as well as draw conclusions regarding the nature of the settlements, their economy, and the customs of the inhabitants in the early period (Mazar 1973, 16–17; Meyers et al. 1981, 23–77, 155–162; Ilan and Damati 1987, 16–42; Aviam 2004a, 106–109).



Figure 10.1 Remains of a domicile with a ritual bath unearthed in Karm er-Ras, near modern-day Kafr Kana, identified by some scholars with Cana/Qana.

Courtesy of Yardena Alexandre.

Iotapata/Yodefath, in the heart of the Lower Galilee, Gamala/Gamla in the Golan, and Magdala/Tarichaeae on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee are especially important for understanding how the Galilean settlement looked in the first century C.E. Founded as early as the Hellenistic period, these settlements flourished in the Early Roman period, and were destroyed in the Great War against Rome. In light of the important finds unearthed in these sites, it is possible to sketch with more precision than ever the face of the Jewish rural settlement in the Galilee and Golan.

10.2.1 Yodefath

Yodefath lies on a low hill with steep slopes rolling into the wadis surrounding it on all sides—except on the north, where there was a saddle connecting it to Mount Yemin (Figure 10.2). Together with the site's topographical conditions and natural defense, the inhabitants of Yodefath found it necessary to fortify their settlement with a wall. In the Hellenistic period (third–second centuries B.C.E.), Yodefath was a small, built-up settlement on the top of the hill, and on the basis of the material finds uncovered there, it appears that its inhabitants were gentile. In the early first century B.C.E., after the conquest of the Galilee

by the Hasmoneans, Yodefat's walls were renovated, and it is assumed that a Jewish population settled the site at this time. Most of the remains discovered at Yodefat attesting to an intensification of building activity and an expansion of the settlement's third phase date from the early Roman period until 67 C.E. The assortment of finds at the site—fortifications, streets, houses, installations, and vessels—attest to the lifestyle of the Jews of Yodefat on the eve of the Great Revolt against Rome (Aviam 1999, 92–101).

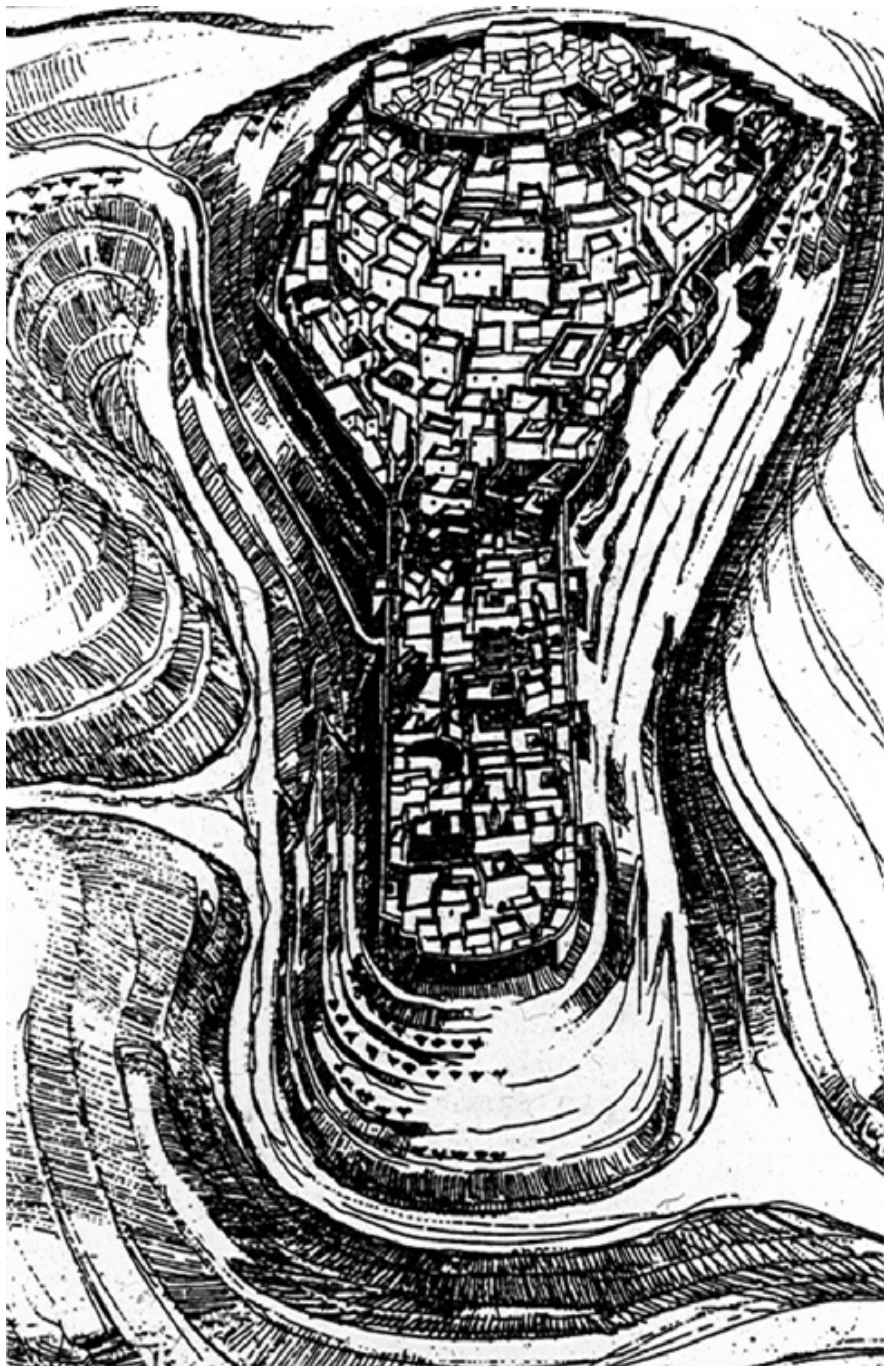


Figure 10.2 General view of Yodfat from the north.

Courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The fortified wall of the first-century C.E. settlement ran at a fairly uniform height and encompassed an area of 50 dunams ([Figure 10.3](#)). On the north, at

the site's weakest defense point, a double wall measuring about 5.5 meters thick was built. On the northeast is a casement wall, while on the southwest, near the hill range, is a fully built wall measuring only 1.5 meters thick (Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 131–143). A narrow street paved with small stones was exposed at one spot adjacent to the wall's interior, and in another, where the slope is much steeper, dwellings were situated along the wall. The houses throughout the settlement were constructed on terraces that conformed to the topography of the hill's slope. Most of them were simply built, as elsewhere in rural Galilee, and each had two to three stories. Their rooms were arranged haphazardly beside the courtyard: the walls were built of rough stones, the doorposts of hewn stones, and the floors were made of packed earth or dressed bedrock. The ceilings of the upper floors and roofs of these houses were made of wooden beams, branches, and packed plaster without supporting arches or roof tiles. The courtyard, containing a water cistern, was partially paved with stone slabs. The ground floor, intended for performing household chores, did not contain especially large spaces, and the water cistern was used for storing liquids, grains, and legumes. Rock-hewn or built stepped pools coated with thick gray plaster that functioned as ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) were also found at the site (Figure 10.4) (Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 144–153).



Figure 10.3 Remains of the western fortified wall of Yodfat.

Courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Figure 10.4 A ritual bath (*mikveh*) installed in a private house located on the southern saddle of Yodefat.

Courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The remains of a mansion were discovered at the northeastern end of the site (Aviam 1999, 98). To date, only one room has been exposed of this beautiful house, whose colorful frescoes are reminiscent of the Second Pompeian Style. The fill in the room contained fragments of stucco, its floor was adorned with paint and patterns imitating marble panels and the walls were decorated with large red and orange ochre-painted panels divided by vertical green-, black-, white-, and red-painted stripes. The bottom of the wall was decorated with a black band containing alternating rectangular panels of imitation marble.

The economy of the first-century C.E. settlement was based on the working of agricultural produce, raising sheep, and small crafts intended primarily for local consumption. An olive press was found in a cave outside the eastern wall of the Yodefat, and four pottery kilns were discovered scattered over the site. The loom weights found in various places attest to weaving activity (Aviam 1999, 97–98; 2004a, 89–91). Among the many potsherds discovered at the site is the almost complete absence of Roman tableware. The preference for locally produced household pottery at Yodefat attests to the settlement's cultural insulation and to the fact that the local inhabitants might have avoided commercial ties with the main markets in the nearby cities. The soft limestone vessels used by the Jewish population were discovered at Yodefat, and were possibly produced on the site or adjacent to it.

10.2.2 Gamla

The topographical conditions at Gamla—a steep mountain range connected to a low saddle from the northeast—provided the settlement with a natural fortification ([Figure 10.5](#)). Stretching over approximately 145 dunams and built largely on the southern slope, it is estimated that on the eve of the Great Revolt against Rome, Gamla boasted about 3,000–4,000 inhabitants. Only isolated sections of walls remained from the Hellenistic settlement, perhaps of a Seleucid fortress that stood atop the mountain range. In the days of Alexander Jannaeus, Gamla expanded significantly and was occupied by a Jewish population. Two building phases were uncovered at the site, from the Hasmonean and early Roman periods; the settlement was destroyed and abandoned in the fall of 67 C.E.



Figure 10.5 General view of Gamla from the east.

Courtesy of Danny Syon, Gamla Excavations.

Gamla was not fortified by a wall. Flavius Josephus attributes the building or repair of the wall there to himself (*War* 2.574; *Life* 186; and see below), but from the archaeological excavations at the site it appears that this was a rather modest building endeavor that was confined only to the eastern end of the site, opposite the saddle and the access roads leading to it. The houses at this eastern end were built irregularly along the slope, at some distance from each other; wishing to fortify their settlement, the rebels blocked the spaces between the dwellings, thickened the existing walls, and filled the rooms with stones ([Figure 10.6](#)).

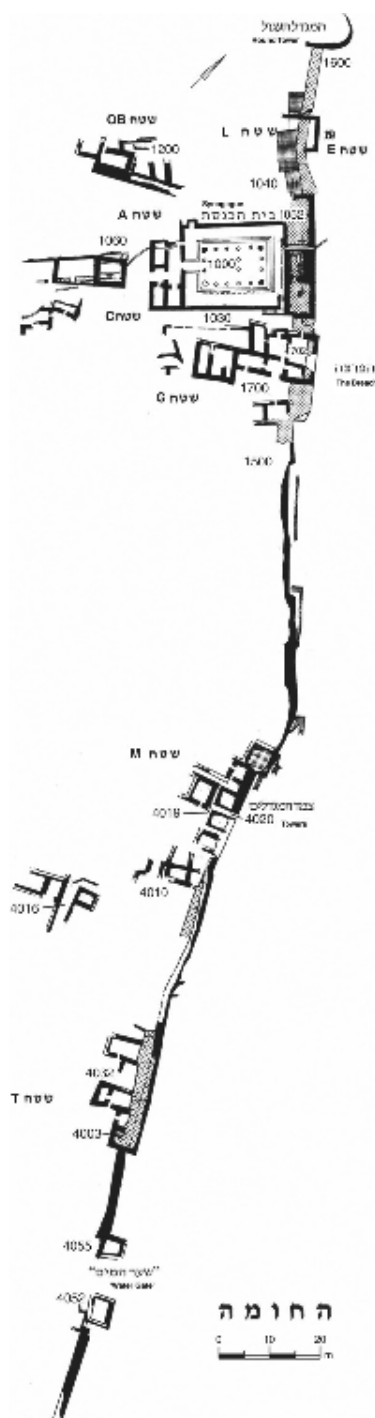


Figure 10.6 Plan of Gamla's fortification and adjacent buildings on the eastern edge of the settlement.

Courtesy of Danny Syon, Gamla Excavations.

The topographical conditions at Gamla dictated the terraced construction on the southern slope (Syon and Yavor et al. 2010, 153–157). The construction lines, dense placement of the structures, and contours of the houses' walls determined the layout of the town that grew organically, in no special order. Movement within Gamla was through the winding narrow alleyways between the houses whereas staircases along the streets were built parallel to the line of the slope. Public squares were placed in front of important structures such as the synagogue and the olive press. Dwellings constructed of local basalt occupied most of the area, and, as far as we know, two public buildings predominated on the site's architectural landscape. While the use of rough, unhewn stones was more widespread in the Hasmonean period, construction with ashlar stones was prevalent in the early Roman period. The building methods used at Gamla are characteristic of the region; however, in the later period there was a distinct Roman influence on local construction, which used columns, capitals, stones decorated with simple profiles, as well as arches to support roofs and upper stories. The houses were paved with packed plaster or stone slabs, depending on the requirements of each, and ceilings and roofs were constructed of wooden beams, branches, and packed plaster. The olive press, in contrast, was roofed over with basalt beams placed one next to the other, a technique characterizing late Roman construction in the Golan and Bashan ([Figure 10.7](#)).



Figure 10.7 Olive press installed in one domicile located at the western end of Gamla.

Courtesy of Danny Syon, Gamla Excavations.

The private dwellings at Gamla, built, as noted, in a stepped fashion on the slope, were usually two-storied structures. Their plan, quality of construction, decoration, and installations are not uniform, and perhaps they are also indicative of the socio-economic and cultural differences in the population at first-century Gamla. Some rooms served as living quarters, several for household chores, and others for storing agricultural produce. On the ground floor of one of the dwellings from the Hasmonean period stood an olive press, in another area a kitchen and even a washroom with a bathtub equipped with a drainhole, as well as a rock-hewn ritual bath (Goren 2010, 113–152). The walls of one of the houses near the synagogue had rectangular niches, serving as “wall closets” for storage, and another had a partition wall containing windows made of large basalt beams that separated two rooms. Judging by the quality of the construction, the houses of the wealthy were situated at the western end of the settlement, where especially large structures have been discovered to date. Some of these first-century C.E. houses exhibited a wide use of architectural decoration whereas fragments of colored and stucco decorations discovered in their debris indicate that at least some of the rooms were decorated as was befitting wealthy homes (Farhi 2010, 175–187).

Two public buildings were exposed at Gamla. One lies at the western end of the site (Syon and Yavor et al. 2010, 69–72). The arrangement of the interior space of this monumental building, which also includes a raised platform and a bench, suggests that public gatherings may have been held there. The other public building is a synagogue located at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to the settlement’s wall and some dwellings ([Figure 10.8](#)). Measuring 17.5 x 21.5 meters and built on a northeast–southwest axis, the building was apparently constructed at the end of the first century B.C.E. (Syon and Yavor et al. 2010, 41–61). The two main entranceways were located in the building’s southwestern façade, and another, smaller in size, was installed in its northeastern corner. Five stepped benches lined the walls of the hall’s interior, and four rows of columns supported the roof of the building. The synagogue was built of well-smoothed hewn stones and boasted Doric and Ionic capitals and heart-shaped columns. Service rooms were located in front of the synagogue, to the southwest, and to the northeast, adjacent to the building’s rear wall, were three rooms, the middle one of which had two benches along its walls.



Figure 10.8 View of the synagogue at Gamla, looking northeast.

Courtesy of Danny Syon, Gamla Excavations.

As elsewhere in the Galilee, the water supply at Gamla was based largely on the drainage of water into cisterns scattered throughout the site. Cisterns with a small capacity were found inside houses, while other, larger, ones were found in public facilities. Nahal Delayot, which flows alongside the settlement, served as an additional water source for the inhabitants. The ritual baths are also a component of the watershed in Jewish settlements, and in Gamla they were found in a number of places. A large public ritual bath was found in front of the synagogue, and other, private, ritual baths were found in dwellings or next to olive presses.

Gamla's economy was agriculturally based, in the fields, vineyards, and orchards of the town's adjacent fertile areas, as well as on raising sheep and cattle. A flour mill, shops, and two olive presses attest to the settlement's agricultural production within the town and had a direct relationship to the dwellings; consequently, there was no clear separation in Gamla between the private and public realms. The inventory of coins discovered at the site attests to the trade relations and export of its agricultural produce to several markets, even those as distant as Tyre and the Phoenician coast. Most of the pottery vessels were produced locally; some were manufactured at Kefar Hananya, but elegant tableware, *terra sigillata* bowls, and even two amphoras from Spain and lamps from Asia Minor were also found at Gamla. Soft limestone vessels were also discovered at Gamla, some of which were produced in a nearby workshop and others were imported from elsewhere in the Galilee and perhaps also in Jerusalem. The finds also represent small-scale chores such as weaving, flour milling, and grain crushing that were usually performed in the home.

10.2.3Magdala/Tarichaeae

Located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, north of Tiberias, the local inhabitants of Magdala specialized in fishing and commerce across the lake. Excavations at the site have revealed several buildings along a narrow thoroughfare of this first-century settlement, as well as some industrial facilities and water installations. Among them is the lavishly decorated first-century C.E. synagogue at the northern end of the site, which is constructed on an east–west axis and includes a rectangular prayer hall and several adjacent rooms to its west and south. Stone benches lined the walls of the hall’s interior and four columns supported the building’s roof. Its walls were decorated with frescoes, and at least its eastern aisle was paved with a mosaic that contained a rosette set within a square. A rectangular stone base that looked like a low table with four small legs was found inside the hall; its top and four sides are adorned with reliefs, including a seven-branched menorah set atop a pedestal with a triangular base and flanked on either side by an amphora, palm trees, rosettes, and other symbols (Figure 10.9). It is possible that the Torah scroll was placed on this unique base when brought into the synagogue hall for the Torah reading ceremony (Avshalom-Gorni and Najar 2013; Levine 2005, 75, 203 n. 105, 237).



Figure 10.9 Rectangular stone base from Magdala decorated on all sides with various Jewish symbols.

Courtesy of Dina Avshalom-Gorni, Israel Antiquities Authority.

10.2.4 Characteristics of the Rural Settlement in the Galilee

Yodefat, Gamla, and Magdala are representative of the rural settlement in first-century C.E. Galilee whereas the data from other sites complement the general picture. The rural settlements in the Galilee developed over time, without any special order or organization. The houses at these sites were built very close to each other, their contours were not straight, and their spatial location was usually determined by the local topography. Most of the houses in the rural settlements were intended for private use and fulfilled the needs of the inhabitants, who were primarily farmers and craftsmen. Olive growing and

oil production were important components of the Galilean economy in the first century C.E. (Meyers et al. 1981, 157–158; Aviam 1994, 26–36; Wagner 1996, 301–305). *Columbaria* located on the border between the Upper and Lower Galilee attest to pigeon raising, and in the settlements near the Sea of Galilee, fishing was the principal industry of the local inhabitants (Wachsmann 1990, 111–124; Tal et al. 2002, 47–59). Rural construction was simple, for the most part, but there were also larger houses of a higher quality decorated with wall paintings and molded plaster that belonged to the rural wealthy (Richardson 2004, 73–90). The existence of wealthy houses beside simple ones is indicative of the socio-economic stratification in first-century Galilee, to which Josephus alludes several times (e.g., *Life* 74–76). Public buildings were few and probably included the synagogue and some other communal building that served the villagers. The ritual baths found in private houses and in the public space, the inventory of pottery vessels (most of which were locally produced), and the use of soft limestone vessels are all indicators of a rural Jewish population in the Galilee.

The similarity between the three above-mentioned settlements sheds new light on rural settlement in the Galilee. Yet, despite this great similarity, an in-depth examination of the archaeological finds informs us of certain differences between them as well, allowing us to conclude that the rural settlements in the Galilee were not monolithic. This does not refer only to the size of the settlement, to the number of inhabitants living in each place, or to the crafts that found expression in one locale but were absent from another. The finds in the rural space point to various degrees of liberalism and parochialism vis-à-vis the surrounding non-Jewish society and find expression in the trade with foreign markets such as the Phoenician coastal cities, the adoption of Roman building techniques and decoration, and imports of pottery vessels and goods from other places. This is particularly evident in the assemblage of pottery vessels for domestic use from Gamla, in addition to those imported wares brought to the site from distant places—the *terra sigillata* ware from the Phoenician coast, the glazed ware from regions of Parthia, and even amphoras from Spain—in contrast to their almost complete absence at Yodefat. Building methods at these sites differed as well. At Gamla and Magdala, arches, columns, capitals, and mosaics were incorporated into the local construction whereas the same elements were absent at Yodefat (Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 165; Syon and Yavor et al. 2010, 155).

The rural settlements in the Galilee indeed resembled each other visually, and their inhabitants worked in agriculture, local trade, and crafts; however, the actual lifestyle, deriving from the economic means and cultural orientation of the inhabitants in each and every locale, was complex and multifaceted. Several villages in the Galilee were large, both in area and population, well based economically, and able to allow themselves a high standard of living, while others, in contrast, were simple and modest. The socio-economic

differences in all probability also influenced the cultural exposure of the Galilean villagers in the first century C.E. The Galilean villagers' contact with major cities in the Galilee—be it from social-familial motives or through trade and economics—as well as their ties with the gentile settlements in the Galilean periphery exposed them to socio-cultural patterns with which they were not familiar (Edwards 1992, 53–73; Freyne 1992, 75–91). Whoever had the means could acquire special wares or decorate the walls of his home—which was usually a simple Galilean structure—with paintings resembling those that graced the homes of the affluent in the Roman world. Even if the Galilean villagers had held onto their Jewish identity from a political, social, and religious point of view, their exposure to their surroundings influenced their rural construction, behavioral patterns, and daily life.

Having determined the nature of the rural settlement, we will now review the large urban centers in first-century C.E. Galilee. In what follows we will attempt to delineate the characteristics of the large settlements, compare the finds from these sites with the rural sphere, and draw conclusions, if possible, about the profile and lifestyle of the Galilean population in the first century C.E.

10.3 The Cities of the Galilee in the First Century C.E.

According to Josephus, there were three large cities in the first-century C.E. Galilee—Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Gabara, which he defines as *poleis* (*Life* 123). Elsewhere he also calls Tarichaeae (*War* 2.252), Gischala (*War* 2.629), Bet Sh'earim (*Life* 118), and even Iotapata *poleis*, at least once (*Life* 332). It is clear that Josephus is not referring to settlements having the urban status of a Greek *polis* but uses this term when referring to large villages or to those that became the capital of a toparchy (Freyne 1980, 103–104). These settlements, whether large or meriting a special status in the Herodian administration, were essentially devoid of any civic institutions typical of a *polis* (Avi-Yonah 2002, 94–97). Thus, it seems that only Tiberias, which, according to Josephus, had civic institutions, was worthy of the title *polis*, and perhaps even Sepphoris was granted a similar status. Sepphoris, the capital of the Galilee at the time, has a long history that can be traced back to the Persian period, whereas Tiberias was founded in the early first century C.E. by Herod Antipas and served as his capital for several decades. Both cities were autonomous and had their own *chôra* (surrounding rural area) (Hoehner 1972, 100; Avi-Yonah 2002, 135–139). The urban population was mainly Jewish, but it is possible that a gentile population lived there as well, the size of which is difficult to determine at this stage of the research (Freyne 1988, 167–175).

10.3.1 Tiberias

Located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias was founded in 19 C.E. by Herod Antipas, who made it his capital (Avi-Yonah 1950, 167–169; Hoehner 1972, 100; Meshorer 2001, 81–82). Josephus briefly describes its boundaries, stating the difficulty Herod Antipas had in populating his new city (*Ant.* 18.36–38). Like the Greco-Roman *polis*, Tiberias, too, summoned assemblies of citizens (*War* 2.618), had a council (*boulê*) of 600 members headed (*War* 2.639–640; *Life* 64, 169, 284, 300, 313, 381) by an *archôn* (*War* 2.599; *Life* 134, 271, 278, 294), and a committee of ten people (*deka prôtoi*) (*War* 2.639–640; *Life* 64–65, 69, 296). Josephus also mentions two officers in Tiberias the *hyparchoi* (*War* 2.615), who supervised municipal affairs, and the *agoranomos* (*Ant.* 18.149) who oversaw the marketplaces. A number of lead weights from Tiberias bear inscriptions mentioning several *agoranomoi* who functioned in the city: Gaius Julius (Figure 10.10) held the office in the 34th year of Herod Antipas's reign (29/30 C.E.), and two others, Isaesaia, son of Mathias, and Animos, son of Monimos, in the reign of Agrippa II (Qedar 1986–87, 29–35; Kushnir-Stein 2002, 295–297). Among the buildings and institutions that stood in Tiberias, Josephus mentions a stadium near the seashore (*War* 2.618; *Life* 92, 331), a synagogue that could accommodate a large crowd (*Life* 277, 280), and the hot baths of Hammat Tiberias that were maintained by the municipality (*War* 2.614–615; *Life* 85–86). Tiberias also had a royal bank and an archive, which were transferred back to Sepphoris in 61 C.E., after the city was annexed to Agrippa II's territory (*Life* 38; Freyne 1980, 130). Herod Antipas built a magnificent palace in Tiberias, which he decorated with figurative images, gold-plated ceilings, and palatial furnishings (*Life* 65–69). The city was fortified by a wall that was constructed either at the time of its foundation (Hoehner 1972, 95) or by the rebels on the eve of the Great Revolt (Avi-Yonah 1950, 163–164).

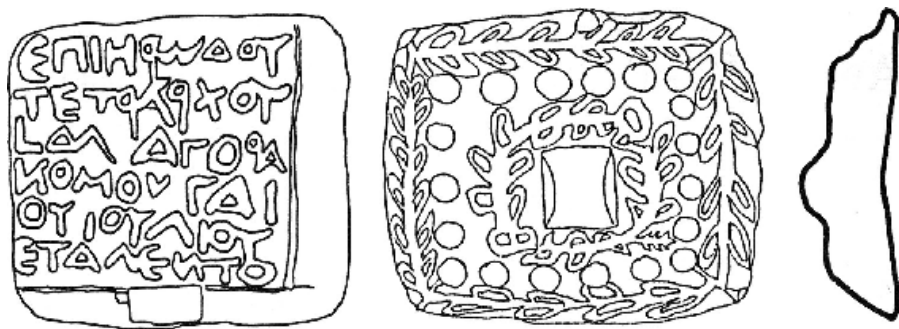


Figure 10.10 Lead weight from Tiberias, bearing an inscription referring to Gaius Julius, the city's *agoranomos* at the time of Herod Antipas.

Reproduced with permission of Israel Numismatic Journal, following Qedar (1986–87,

Despite the scanty remains that have been excavated in Tiberias, the existence of several massive buildings in the city offers a glimpse into its architectural appearance in the first century C.E. and alludes to the fact that it was built as a Greco-Roman *polis*. At the southern end of Tiberias, a monumental gate marking the municipal boundary was exposed, as was a stone-paved road leaving the city northward (Figure 10.11) (Foerster 1977, 87–91; Weber 2002, 326–330; Jensen 2006, 139–140; Hartal 2010). The gate has two round towers protruding from either side of the southern entranceway.



Figure 10.11 Gate discovered south of Tiberias, with two round towers and a stone-paved road (in the forefront) leading to the city center.

Photo: Zeev Weiss.

Remains of walls, columns, and a colorful marble floor dating to the first century C.E. were discovered in Tiberias, near the shore of the Sea of Galilee. These remains, it appears, belong to an early mansion that had a hall surrounded by columns overlooking the sea—perhaps, as Josephus states, Herod Antipas’s palace that was built with the founding of the city (Jensen 2006, 143–144).

Two buildings for public entertainment are known to date. Excavation of the theater reveals that its first phase is to be attributed to Herod Antipas (Figure 10.12). The building which faces north is located adjacent to and west of the *cardo*, leading from the city’s gate into the center (Atrash 2012, 79–83). The

remains of the stadium mentioned by Josephus were discovered on the seashore, some 200 meters northeast of Roman Tiberias's city center (Hartal 2008). More than 10 meters of a massive ashlar wall (measuring 9 meters wide and preserved to a height of 3 meters) running north to south and curving westward were unearthed; the remainder of this wall, which was robbed after the building went out of use, is part of the semicircular southern end (*sphendonê*) of a stadium upon which the spectators' seats were built. The length of the stadium is unknown, but it is clear that the building was quite narrow (about 39 meters wide). The location of the building along the shoreline corroborates Josephus's account, which describes how he fled from his rivals gathered in the stadium, to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he caught a boat that took him to Tarichaeae (*War* 2.618–619; *Life* 92–96).



Figure 10.12 View of the theater in Tiberias, looking east.

Photo: Zeev Weiss.

Tiberias's coins, which were minted in the time of Herod Antipas, add another dimension to the Roman-civic character of the city. Its first series of coins, with four coin denominations, were minted in Tiberias with the founding of the city in 19 C.E. (Figures 10.13a and 10.13b). The obverse depicts a reed with the date and the inscription in Greek: "of Herod the Tetrarch"; the reverse bears the name of the city, "003A4iberias," inside a wreath. This issue was followed by four additional mintings in 29/30, 30/31, 33/34, and 39 C.E. All the city's coins bear floral motifs—the reed, palm branch, palm tree, and

date cluster (Meshorer 2001, 81–85). Tiberias’s city council also minted coins in the thirteenth year of the emperor Claudius’s reign (53/54 C.E.). This series, having three denominations, resembled the first coins, except for the Greek inscription around the date palm that mentions the emperor Claudius (Meshorer 2001, 153).



Figure 10.13 (a) Coin of Herod Antipas, 19 C.E., minted in Tiberias: obverse: “of Herod the Tetrarch”; (b) reverse: “Tiberias.”

Photo Gabi Laron, courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

10.3.2 *Sepphoris*

Sepphoris lies on a hill 289 meters above sea level, in the heart of the Lower Galilee. Its long history can be traced back to the Persian period, and it may be assumed that by the second century B.C.E. it was populated by Jews. Herod the Great owned a royal palace in the city (*War* 2.56; *Ant.* 17.271), and after his death (4 B.C.E.), his son Herod Antipas made Sepphoris his capital until he founded Tiberias (Hoehner 1972, 43–110). Josephus briefly remarks that Antipas “fortified Sepphoris to be the ornament of all Galilee, and called it *Autocratoris*” (*Ant.* 18.27; trans. Feldman, LCL). Several scholars maintain that he fortified the city and established various public buildings in it that are often found in Roman cities, such as the theater (Strange 1992, 23–59; Horsley 1996, 49–60; Reed 2000, 62–96; Jensen 2006, 149–162, 242–248). However, a more precise reading of the text indicates that Herod Antipas renovated only the city’s wall and did not construct or finance any other building projects in the city. Josephus mentions that Sepphoris now had a defensive fortification that, owing to its topographical location on the acropolis and its massive wall, could protect the city from attack (Miller 1984,

56–57; Weiss 2007a, 392–394). On the eve of the revolt, the Sepphoreans renovated the city’s fortifications from their own monies (*War* 2.574). Years later, rabbis who were aware of the city’s defense walls used the term *castra* —“the old *castra* of Sepphoris”—referring to its fortified acropolis (Mishnah Arakhin 9.6; Tosefta Shabbat 13.9; Sifra, Behar, Parashah 4.1; Miller 1984, 15–30).

After the emperor Nero incorporated Tiberias and its environs into Agrippa II’s kingdom in 61 C.E., Sepphoris regained its political status in the Galilee, at which time the royal bank and public archive were restored to the city (*Life* 38–39). We know very little about the city’s municipal institutions in the first century C.E. Josephus often mentions “the Sepphorites” (*Life* 373, 380, 394, 411), but nowhere does he refer to the functioning officials or public leaders of the city (*War* 2.574, 645; *Life* 373, 394, 411). The “old *archi* of Sepphoris,” mentioned several times in talmudic literature (e.g., Mishnah Qiddushin 4.5), might refer to the municipal institutions that functioned there in earlier days, however, there is nothing in the texts that alludes to this other than the former existence of Jewish archives in Sepphoris at a rather early date. Among the public buildings in Sepphoris, Josephus refers only to the fortifications, mentioned above, and the *agora* (the local marketplace), where he met Jesus, the brigand chief (*Life* 104–111). The *agora* in Sepphoris, as in every Hellenistic city, was an open area, at times with buildings nearby, where merchants gathered and sold their wares (Coulton 1976, 62–65).

To date, only one coin was minted by Herod Antipas in Sepphoris, in the fourth year of his tetrarchy. The obverse depicts a palm with the inscription in Greek “[of] Hero[d],” and the reverse bears a grain and his title, “the Tetrarch” (Hendin 2006, 56–61). After Herod Antipas moved to his new capital, the local administration in Sepphoris no longer issued coins; the city therefore lacked yet another feature characterizing autonomous cities at the time. Only in 67/68 C.E., in wartime, did the city first mint coins, perhaps at the initiative of Agrippa II who moved his seat there (Figure 10.14). The Greek inscription set in a wreath on the obverse of these coins reads: “Year 14 to Nero Claudius the Emperor.” The reverse bears a pair of intersecting *cornucopiae* with a caduceus between them, surrounded by the inscription: “In the days of Vespasian in Neronias-Sepphoris, City of Peace” (Meshorer 2001, 102–105). Naming the city “Neronias-Sepphoris... Eirenopolis,” corroborates Josephus’s account of the city’s behavior in support of Rome and opposing the revolt (*War* 3.30–34; Miller 2001, 453–467).



Figure 10.14 Coin from Sepphoris, minted during the Great Revolt against Rome in 67/68 C.E.: reverse: “In the days of Vespasian in Neronias-Sepphoris, City of Peace”; obverse: “Year 14 to Nero Claudius the Emperor.”

Courtesy of Victor England, Classical Numismatic Group Inc. no. 694.

Compared to Tiberias, the archaeological remains known to date from Sepphoris are far richer, more diverse, and impressive, shedding new light on the architectural development of the city from the Hellenistic period through Late Antiquity (Weiss and Netzer 1997, 2–21; Weiss 2007b 125–136; 2010, 196–217). None of the Roman-style public buildings unearthed at the site so far dates to the early first century C.E., but they appear to have been constructed when the city was expanded and completely remodeled as a Roman *polis* at the end of the first or early second century C.E. (Weiss 2007a, 397–404).

First-century C.E. Sepphoris stretched over the hill and its slopes whereas the size of the settlement and its outward appearance were not much different from the large villages in the Galilee that Josephus called *poleis* (Figure 10.15). The simple buildings exposed over the hill characterized the settlement, whose layout lacked an air of monumentality and resembled the characteristic rural construction of the Galilee. In addition to the road leading into the city, as well as some agricultural implements typical of the rural ambience of the immediate vicinity, only a few buildings, if any, would have been noticeable in Lower Sepphoris.



Figure 10.15 View of the acropolis on which Sepphoris's settlement stood in the first century C.E.

Photo Gabi Laron.

The city's water supply was based largely on the drainage of rainwater into rock-quarried cisterns scattered over the hill and its slopes. Most of the water cisterns (of varying capacities) discovered were used for domestic purposes. A large water cistern was discovered in the center of the acropolis, in front of the Crusader fortress and south of it; owing to its capacity, about 380 cubic meters, and its location in the center of the early settlement, it appears to have functioned as a public reservoir. Another public water installation stood in the early city, the "Arches Reservoirs," located east of the saddle ([Figure 10.16](#)). Having a capacity of about 180 cubic meters, this reservoir was roofed over with stone slabs laid across five massive arches; it is assumed that it supplied water to the fields and few buildings in the Lower City.



Figure 10.16 The “Arches Reservoir,” located east of Sepphoris’s saddle, adjacent to the road leading to the first-century settlement. The reservoir was roofed over with stone slabs laid across five massive arches.

Courtesy of Tsvika Tsuk.

Besides the ruins of a large building with massive walls exposed at the western end of the hill, nothing has yet been found of the city wall from the first century C.E. The building is dated to the first century C.E. and includes three rooms and two large ritual baths that remain from the ground floor of the original building (Meyers et al. 2015, 133–134) ([Figure 10.17](#)). The roughly dressed fieldstone walls, measuring 1.87 meters thick, were built on bedrock.



Figure 10.17 Remains of a first-century building with massive walls constructed on the western side of Sepphoris's acropolis. Three rooms and two large ritual baths remain from the ground floor of the original building.

Courtesy of Eric Meyers.

The remains of several dwellings from the early Roman period were

discovered in some areas scattered over the acropolis, indicating that domestic construction in the early city occupied wide areas of the hill and its slopes (Meyers et al. 1995, 68–71; Meyers et al. 1997, 265–268; Meyers et al. 1998, 278–281; Hoglund and Meyers 1996, 39–43; Weiss and Netzer 1997, 8). The style and plan of these terraced structures find parallels elsewhere in the Galilee. Their walls are built of local stone, at times partially smoothed; the floor are made of packed plaster, stone pavers, or dressed bedrock—but no mosaics. The roofs were made of beams, branches, and packed plaster, and in several places even an arch and vault crowned the room, especially in the subterranean levels as, for example, in the *miqva'ot*. The houses were used continuously in the first centuries C.E., and modifications are evident throughout the period. They contained a courtyard and an unfixed number of rooms in addition to ritual baths (Figure 10.18), water cisterns, or various-sized storerooms installed in their basements.



Figure 10.18 Ritual bath (*miqveh*) discovered beneath the remains of the House of Dionysos, on the eastern side of Sepphoris's acropolis.

Photo: Gabi Laron.

No remains have been recovered of the palatial building, which, according to

Josephus, stood in Sepphoris in the days of Herod the Great or when his son Herod Antipas resided in the city (*War* 2.56; *Ant.* 17.271). Nevertheless, fragments of frescoes from fills beneath the House of Dionysos, on the eastern side of the hill, belong to a more luxurious building, perhaps a palace, that stood in this part of the city. The plaster fragments were decorated with floral patterns in several shades on a grey-black background reminiscent of the Third Pompeian Style (Talgam and Weiss 2004, 27–28). Even if we cannot link these fragments to the palatial building in Sepphoris, it may be assumed that they decorated some other prominent building that stood on the hill in the first century C.E., as was the case at Gamla, Yodefat, or Magdala (Aviam 1999, 98; Farhi 2010, 175–187).

The wealth and economy in first-century C.E. Sepphoris were based primarily on agriculture, raising sheep and cattle, and small crafts. Besides a small amount of imported vessels, most of the pottery found at the site were local wares, including those produced in Kefar Hananya and Shikhin (Figure 10.19). The pottery vessels from Sepphoris and the inventory of coins from the first century C.E. point to the commercial ties the Sepphoreans maintained with other cities in the Galilee, such as Tyre and Akko-Ptolemais on the Phoenician coast. The inhabitants of Sepphoris also used stone vessels resembling those found in Jerusalem, and it seems that they were produced in one of the local workshops in the Galilee, perhaps in Sepphoris or a neighboring settlement.



Figure 10.19 Assemblage of first-century C.E. pottery vessels from Sepphoris, discovered inside a cistern that was canceled with the construction of the theater in the late first–early second century C.E.

Photo: Gabi Laron.

10.4 City and *Polis* in First-Century C.E. Galilee

Josephus identifies several locales by the term “city,” a few of them erroneously and others correctly since they were especially large. However, in light of what has been said above, only Tiberias, of all the cities in the Galilee, is worthy of the title *polis*. The three large cities in the Galilee mentioned by Josephus might have stretched over a similarly sized area, with a similar number of inhabitants, but the political organization, architectural layout, and urban landscape of first-century C.E. Tiberias were different from those of Sepphoris (and also from those of Gabara, which still remains unexcavated). Tiberias was founded as a Greco-Roman *polis* under the patronage of the emperor, received political autonomy, and had the governmental institutions needed for self-rule. Hypothetically, Sepphoris could have been organized as such, but the meager evidence cannot support such an assumption.

Architecturally, each city had a distinct appearance. Herod Antipas founded Tiberias, which had a monumental appearance with very large public buildings, just as his father had done when founding Caesarea and as known in other Roman cities of the early empire (Patrich 2005, 497–538). In contrast, Sepphoris on the eve of the Great Revolt against Rome looked like a very large village, a “city” according to Josephus, with a less impressive character than that of Tiberias. Its architectural landscape did not exhibit monumental signs, as it boasted few, if any, Roman-style public buildings. Herod Antipas contributed to the renovation of Sepphoris’s wall, but his main concern and focus of attention were directed toward the building of Tiberias as his new capital. Sepphoris’s private houses were built on the hill and its slopes, while the fortress, the king’s palace, the *agora*, and other structures (such as the archive or the royal bank that stood in the city, according to Josephus) were located presumably on top of the hill. The lack of Roman-style public buildings in first-century C.E. Sepphoris is evident not only in the archaeological finds, but is also confirmed by Josephus’s testimony. The author neither ignores the buildings in Sepphoris nor refrains from mentioning them, but rather faithfully describes the reality of his era, wherein the city lacked a monumental appearance—in contrast to its counterpart Tiberias (Weiss 2007a, 408).

Only years later, after the suppression of the revolt, did Sepphoris—owing to its pro-Roman stance—make great strides in its transformation from a Galilean town into a prominent Roman *polis*. In the ensuing years of the Roman era, both of these Galilean cities resembled each other in their urban landscape, governmental institutions, public buildings, and cultural patterns; this new reality, however, does not lie within the purview of the present discussion.

Although the architectural appearance of Tiberias and Sepphoris, rival cities competing for political primacy in first-century C.E. Galilee, was significantly different, they both shared certain features in other realms of their material culture. Galilean pottery, manufactured either in Kefar Hananya or Shikhin,

was commonly used in both cities; the number of Jewish coins in each is very large; soft limestone vessels are also known in both, although not in large quantities. The cities' exposure to Greco-Roman culture and its assimilation are also expressed, though it should be emphasized that most of the available information comes from Sepphoris, which has been excavated more extensively than Tiberias. This, of course, does not refer to the construction of public buildings, which, as noted, differed in each locale but is evident in the private realm. In both these cities, as in the villages, Roman building techniques were combined with local traditions. The discovery of fragments of colored frescoes, not *in situ* in both locales, suggests that the houses of the wealthy were decorated with wall paintings containing geometric and floral patterns. Simple housewares were found alongside small quantities of imported luxury wares that graced the tables of the wealthy in Tiberias and Sepphoris. Indeed, the architectural landscape of these cities was perhaps different, but it did not influence the lifestyle and domestic customs of their inhabitants, which were pretty much the same everywhere.

10.5 The Population of the Galilee in the First Century C.E.: Material Culture and Behavioral Patterns in City and Village

Except for Tiberias, which was the only *polis* in the Galilee boasting a monumental appearance, both large and small villages in first-century C.E. Galilee were parochial, rural, settlements. The construction in these rural areas, whether we call them small cities or large villages, was simple, with no prior planning, and in most cases used local materials. From afar, these Galilean settlements appear to have been rather uniform. The dwellings in Sepphoris, as at Yodefat and Gamla, were built on terraces that conformed to the natural slope of the hill. The architectural landscape was rather similar, and except for the synagogue (to which one or two large structures were added for public purposes), the private dwellings densely filled the horizon. Yet, just as first-century C.E. Sepphoris did not resemble Tiberias, the rural area as well exhibited diversity in its demographic make-up and external character. The demographic profile drawn by the archaeological finds thus points to similarity yet exhibits diversity from one settlement to the next, originating, it appears, in the economic means of the Galilean villagers, in their cultural orientation, and in their degree of openness and desire to plan, build, and decorate their houses or hometown in the spirit of the times.

The Hasmonean conquests in northern Palestine led to the establishment of the Jewish population in the Galilee, which grew demographically and stabilized economically in the course of time (Leibner 2012, 437–469).

Despite the great tension between city and village, and notwithstanding the political-religious-social rivalry between the Galileans (resident of the villages) and the inhabitants of Sepphoris and Tiberias, several archaeological finds appearing rather consistently throughout the Galilee may be instructive in clarifying the ethnic identity of the local population. Both portray a similar, and even uniform, cultural identity, leading one to conclude that the Jewish population in first-century C.E. Galilee was ethnically, culturally, and religiously homogeneous, and that its customs were similar in many respects to what was customary in Judea and Jerusalem.

The survey of the finds below will first present the installations and objects that were used exclusively by the Jews in the late Second Temple period and then discuss the finds attesting foreign influences on the local culture. It will be followed by an examination of the nature of the Jewish population, its lifestyle, customs, and cultural behavior in first-century C.E. Galilee.

10.5.1 Ritual Baths (*Miqva'ot*)

Ritual baths uncovered at several sites in the Galilee were exclusive to the Jewish settlements in ancient Palestine. Most of them were in private use, but they were also found in public spaces. The Galilean *miqva'ot* in Yodefat, Gamla, Arbel, and Sepphoris, for example, are generally alike, but their actual appearance differs from place to place (Ilan 1989–90, 17–18; Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 151–152, 164; Galor 2007, 201–213; Amit 2010, 193–195). Generally, they were hewn into rock, in some places next to large water cisterns, and their walls were coated with a few layers of gray plaster. Some *miqva'ot* were dug beneath floor level while others were built as stepped pools, the bottom part of which was partially dug into the rock. Descent into the *miqveh* was by steps, sometimes narrow, located on one of its side walls. The diversity lies in the features of the staircase—whether having straight or curved descent into the pool, the number of steps, and if they stretched across the entire width of the *miqveh* or only part of it. In most of the Galilean *miqva'ot*, the earliest of which are dated to the first century B.C.E., there is no *otzar* (a small collection pool on the side of the *miqveh* in which water deemed “clean” for immersion is kept; on the common wall between the two installations is a channel, pipe or hole through which the drawn water in the *miqveh* and the “clean” rainwater in the *otzar* can touch, thereby rendering the water in the *miqveh* suitable for immersion). They were most likely fed by a steady water supply, either via gutters running down from the buildings’ roofs or via channels that drained the water from nearby open areas (Sanders 1990, 214–227; Regev 2006, 3–21). The double opening or low partition on the steps was also absent—in contrast to its counterparts in Judea and Jerusalem, where these components of the *miqveh* mark the separation between the

impure descending into the immersion pool and the pure emerging from it after purification (Reich 1980, 225–256). Despite the differences between the Galilee and Judea, the stepped pools in both regions served the same purpose—immersion and purification. The dimensions of the *miqva’ot* in the Galilee are not uniform and their capacity, even in the smallest ones, was double that needed according to tannaitic halacha, though it was sometimes much smaller than those in Jerusalem (Mishnah *Miqva’ot* 1.4 and 7). Some *miqva’ot* are especially small (2.3–4.5 cubic meters), although they are sufficient for the immersion of a single individual of average size. In places such as Sepphoris, larger, rectangular, installations were found (5.6–8.5 cubic meters) that allowed for comfortable immersion.

10.5.2 Wares in Private Use: Pottery Vessels, Lamps, and Stoneware

The Galileans used a variety of vessels, mostly made of pottery but also of stone, glass, and probably even metal and wood, though the poor preservation of the latter two materials has yielded few finds. The various types of vessels were used for household purposes—storage, cooking, preparation of food, tableware, and dining—whereas small-sized vessels such as juglets and perfume bottles were for personal use. We will not review the entire range of domestic wares used in the Galilee, but will point out those types that were *sui generis* to the region, whether found in large quantities or practically unknown at other sites outside of the Jewish realm. These vessels, which were consciously preferred over those manufactured by non-Jews, serve as a cultural markers of ethnic identity, attesting to the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of the Jews in first-century C.E. Galilee.

Most of the pottery vessels discovered throughout the Galilee were made in local workshops of a settlement or nearby (Aviam 1999, 97; Ben-David 2005, 137–140). Two larger workshops in the region, which specialized in the production of specific types of vessels, manufactured goods primarily for Galilean Jews, but the same vessels were also found in smaller quantities at gentile sites surrounding the Galilee. The workshop in Kefar Hananya, which began to produce in the second half of the first century B.C.E., specialized in the production of kitchenware (bowls, cooking pots, cooking jugs, etc.) and that in Shikhin in storage jars (Adan-Bayewitz 1993, 235–239; Strange et al. 1994, 171–187). The number of locally produced vessels is much greater than the imported wares; this number increases in the first half of the first century C.E., whereas on the eve of the Great Revolt, the imported vessels disappear almost entirely from the Jewish sites in the Galilee. Andrea Berlin asserts that the preference for local wares expresses the practice of the Galilean Jews who, after Herod’s death, wished to reject Roman practices and adhere to a

traditional, simple, Jewish lifestyle (Berlin 2002, 57–73; 2006, 144–156). Danny Syon, in contrast, maintains that the difference is economic in nature and stems from the costs and taxes levied on transporting merchandise from place to place in the Galilee (Syon 2004, 153–156). The wide distribution of plain wares within the borders of Jewish Galilee serves as a unique indicator of the local Jewish population who preferred to use vessels produced by known craftsmen in the region, whether because of a religious-national or an economic motive.

A wheel-made lamp with a hand-made nozzle joined to its body and paring marks on its sides (“Herodian lamps”) was popular at the Galilean sites alongside the local tablewares (Adan-Bayewitz et al. 2008, 37–85). First appearing at the end of the first century B.C.E., these lamps were apparently produced in the Jerusalem area and then transported to the north. Another lamp, different from the former in the design of its mouth and nozzle, was common especially in the Lower Galilee and was probably manufactured in the region, in Sepphoris or in one of the nearby settlements (Sussman 1990, 97–98; Gärtner 1999, 27–28). Like the Judeans, the Galileans also preferred the plain, undecorated, lamps produced by Jews over the round, usually decorated Roman lamps (Berlin 2005, 434–437).

The soft limestone vessels (impervious to impurity) that were well known in Jerusalem were also used by Galilean villagers and city dwellers alike. They are mentioned in the story of Jesus’ miracle of the water at the wedding in Cana (John 2:6), and similar vessels were found in large quantities in Yodefat, Gamla, Capernaum, Nazareth, and Sepphoris, for example (Magen 2002, 160–161). Besides the large chalice-shaped storage vessel (the *kallal*), the repertoire includes large quantities of cups (also called “measuring cups” in professional jargon), bowls, and various-sized trays, jar lids, and small vessels for personal use. The inventory of vessels, including those made by lathe and by hand, is somewhat similar to that found in Jerusalem, although some differences are discernible in production methods; it seems that the proportion between the various vessel types in the Galilee differs from that in Jerusalem. It is possible that several vessels, and perhaps only certain types, were imported from Jerusalem to the north; however, there were a few workshops manufacturing soft limestone vessels that were operative in the Galilee—one in Kefar Reine and the other not far from it, at the foot of Mount Yonah near Nazareth (Gal 1991, 25*–26*; Mount Yonah, communication with the late Dr. David Amit). These workshops, which lie not far from Sepphoris and might have had connections with each other, specialized in the production of “measuring cups,” whereas the one at the foot of Mount Yonah also produced various types of bowls. Vessel cores and waste products found in Bethlehem-in-the-Galilee attest that there were also “household” workshops in a number of settlements in the Lower Galilee that supplied the local demand for specific vessel types (Gibson 2003, 289–291).

Very small quantities of soft limestone vessels were discovered in gentile settlements along the Coastal Plain and in Transjordan; most of them were found in regions densely populated by Jews, so that they were rightfully included among the classic indicators attesting to an increased Jewish presence in those locales. The soft limestone vessels produced by Jews for the use of Jews were found in those same settlements containing ritual baths. It is difficult to know what led to the large-scale production of these vessels expressly in the first century C.E., and for what demand or purpose they were intended (Magen 2002, 162; Weiss 2005, 310). Yitzhak Magen and Eyal Regev link the production of stone vessels to the scrupulous observation of purity laws in priestly circles and among the Pharisees and Qumran sectarians at the end of the Second Temple period (Regev 2000, 176–202; Magen 2002, 138–147). Shim'on Gibson claims that this was a wider social phenomenon not necessarily connected to purity or to a specific religious group (Gibson 2003, 302–303; Miller 2003, 402–419). Berlin, for her part, examines the similarity between several stone vessels and the luxury ware of gentiles, and maintains that the Jews, out of a desire to reinforce their self-identity, preferred stone vessels of local production to the imported luxury ware (Berlin 2005, 429–434). At this stage of the research, it is impossible to determine the reason for the widespread use of stone vessels in the first century C.E.—be it for religious, national, or personal motives—but this unique inventory, somewhat similar to that of pottery vessels and lamps, attests to Jewish Galilean practices and the choice—similar to the that of the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem—to use vessels intended from the outset for the Jewish population.

10.5.3Coins

The Galileans used a variety of coins that were legal tender in the Roman economy, enabling us to assess the nature of local and interregional commerce in the first century B.C.E. and first century C.E. Several coins of various denominations were issued, mostly in Tiberias by Herod Antipas, yet these were but one component in the currency circulated in the Galilee. The coinage circulating in the region is diverse and includes Jewish coins, coins from the coastal Phoenician cities, as well as city and imperial coins. Their distribution is indicative of the ethno-political and economic orientation of the Galileans and to the changes that took place in the region from the late Hellenistic period until the Great Revolt. A clear propensity was discerned among the Galilean Jews of the Hasmonean period for coins minted by the Jewish authorities (as opposed to Phoenician currency). An ethnic preference for Jewish coins became stronger in the early Roman period, when Herodian coins were introduced into circulation (Syon 2004, 224–252). The Jewish coins from Gamla comprise more than 60% of the total number of coins found

at the site; at Yodefat, they comprise over 40%, and a similar picture is obtained also from the first-century C.E. inventory at Meiron and Sepphoris (Raynor, Meshorer and Hansen 1988, 82–85; Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 158; Syon 2004, 27–88).

The distribution of coins in the Galilee reveals no real difference between city and village (Syon 2004, 237–252). The large number of Jewish coins in the region signifies a deliberate preference of the Galilean Jews for coins issued by Jewish authorities—either because of the ways in which the local economy was conducted or out of self-identity and the promotion of symbols conveying the message of freedom and national independence. Yet, it appears that the commercial ties with the gentile neighbors in the settlements around the Galilee obliged Galilean Jews to use other coins as well that were known throughout the region.

10.5.4 Synagogues

Cultic buildings attest most naturally to the religious-ethnic affiliation of the population in a specific place. There were no temples in the Galilee proper—only on its periphery, in Hippos, Omrit, and Paneas (Ma'oz 1998, 18–25; Segal et al. 2004, 19–23; Nelson 2011, 27–44). Synagogues were prominent on both the urban and rural landscapes in the first century C.E., and according to the New Testament there were synagogues in Capernaum, Nazareth, and virtually every settlement of the Galilee that Jesus visited and to which he brought his gospel (e.g., Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:21–28, 39; Luke 4:16–43). Such public buildings were also known in Tiberias, where Josephus calls the synagogue a *proseuchê*, a house of prayer (*Life* 277, 280). Over the years, several suggestions have been raised as to which buildings in first-century C.E. Galilee may have functioned as synagogues. The large dimensions of a building, the quality of its construction, the location of the remains at a site, and its resemblance to other such buildings in the Galilee and beyond all helped scholars consolidate their theory, though it is still doubtful whether these structures actually functioned as synagogues (Corbo 1982, 313–357; Edwards 2002, 111–114). To date, only two first-century C.E. buildings, in Gamla and Magdala, have been identified as synagogues. The architectural features of these buildings resemble the Second Temple synagogues discovered at Masada, Herodium, Modi'in, and Qiryat Sefer in Judea (Netzer 2003, 277–285; Levine 2005, 45–80). The interior space of these structures, with their rectangular plans and dissimilar orientation, contained columns to support the roof and stepped benches for sitting along the walls, and a few buildings there also had annexed rooms, water installations, and others of uncertain identification. The Galilean synagogues add yet another dimension, previously unknown in the other comparable buildings. The main hall at both

sites was decorated, although each used a different artistic medium. The decorated stone base from Magdala bore some Jewish symbols appearing for the first time in Galilean context. This unique piece of furniture, probably used for holding the scrolls, is important in assessing the nature of activities that took place in the first-century C.E. synagogue (see above).

10.5.5 Tombs and Burial

Jewish burial practices in the Second Temple period are known primarily from the assortment of burial places uncovered in Jerusalem and its environs, where it was possible to ascertain the form of the tombs, their decorations, burial practices, and the location of the necropolis on the settlement's periphery (Kloner and Zissu 2007). Many tombs were uncovered in the Galilee, yet, unlike those from Jerusalem, none of them has been securely dated to the end of the first century B.C.E. or the first century C.E. (Aviam 2004a, 257–313). Among the burial caves known in the Galilee, there is one important group of tombs whose material finds attest to its ongoing use from the first to second centuries C.E., and then to a cessation of burial there (Ravani 1961, 121–125; Avigad 1976, 91–92; Feig 1990, 67–79; Najjar 1995, 47–48; Abu 'Uqsa and Najjar 1997, 48–49; Najjar 1998, 28; Stern 1998, 15; Muqari 1999, 25*; Feig 2000, 49*–53*; Vitto 2008, 7*–29*).

The inability to isolate the early finds from the late ones is the reason why several scholars maintain that it is impossible to assess the burial customs and methods that prevailed in first-century C.E. Galilee (Berlin 2005, 464–466; Aviam 2004b, 20–21). This statement is devoid of any logic for a number of reasons. The available information on burial and burial practices in the Galilee is limited from the outset, due to the small number of wide-ranging excavations over the years. An attempt to draw parallels between the historical-demographic reality of the Galilee and that of Judea and Jerusalem, and to reach some conclusions regarding burial customs in first-century C.E. Galilee, completely ignores what transpired in Jerusalem with the suppression of the revolt and the destruction of the temple. Burial ceased in Jerusalem after 70 C.E., and with the desertion of the city the entire necropolis surrounding it was abandoned. Such was not the case in the Galilee, however, where there is no gap in settlement, and except for Yodefat and Gamla, which were destroyed and abandoned, Jewish life continued uninterrupted for centuries to come. The local Jewish inhabitants buried their dead in the second century C.E. in the same places used by them and by their forefathers in the first century C.E. Moreover, with the continuation and relative stability after the revolt, the Jewish population established itself in the Galilee in the second and third centuries C.E., the number of inhabitants in the region grew, and the settlements expanded. At this stage, the need for burial places also

grew and, accordingly, solutions were found in each and every locale: in several places, existing burial caves continued to be used, in others, existing spaces were expanded, and in certain cases new caves were hewn, perhaps in place of old ones, so that later modifications becloud the earlier finds. Nevertheless, the fact that those who lived in the second century C.E. continued to use first-century C.E. burial caves and applied the same burial methods used by their predecessors enables us to draw some conclusions with regard the burial customs prevailing in the Galilee on the eve of the Great Revolt against Rome.

In light of the above, and after an examination of the first- and second-century C.E. burial caves in the Galilee, it would seem that these burial practices resemble what existed in the same period in Judea, and especially in Jerusalem. No burial caves boasting an ornamental façade such as those known in Jerusalem have been found in the Galilee to date. According to Berlin (2005, 465–466), such tombs did not exist in the Galilee in the first century C.E. The absence of evidence is not evidence for absence, especially in light of the limited number of excavations, as mentioned above. It is difficult to imagine that the wealthy of the Galilee, including the inhabitants of Sepphoris and Tiberias, were not influenced at all by what was transpiring in Jerusalem. Just as they adopted a lifestyle that was not much different from their Jerusalemite counterparts, including the use of wall paintings and mosaics, there is no reason to assume that some of them did not adorn the façades of their burial caves in a similar manner.

Primary burials in the Galilee were, for the most part, in rock-cut caves containing niches (*kukhim* or *loculi*), differing in number from cave to cave. Secondary bone collection (*ossilegium*) was carried out in the Galilee in small niches cut into one of the tomb's walls or in stone or clay ossuaries, somewhat resembling the finds from Jerusalem but of poorer decoration and lower quality (Aviam and Syon 2002, 151–187). In maintaining the practice of *ossilegium*, first-century C.E. Galileans used similar ossuaries, but their design was different than what was customary in Judea. The burial methods were the same, but not necessarily identical. Just as some of the burial and mourning customs mentioned in rabbinic literature were different in the Galilee and Judea, so the ossuaries differed to some extent from place to place (Tractate Semahot 10, 15; Yerushalmi Mo'ed Qatan 3.5 [82d]; Berakhot 2.7 [5b]).

10.5.6 Foreign Influences on the Material Culture of the Galilee

There were other areas in the daily life and material culture of first-century Galilee that were influenced by the surrounding Greco-Roman society. This

does not refer to the monumental public buildings in Tiberias or the use of foreign currency in local markets, but rather to several facets of life in the private sphere in both the cities and villages. Such elements were not found in every place, and at times only one component, or several features together, could appear in one locale; however, in an all-inclusive and wider view, it is possible to assess the scope of foreign influences apparent in first-century C.E. Galilee.

Galilean construction does not reflect a particularly extensive use of Greco-Roman building methods. In Gamla, for example, the arch was used, and, in Sepphoris, arches as well as vaults. The architectural ornamentation in Gamla and Magdala—column bases and capitals—exhibits similarities to the stonework in the Greco-Roman world, although the quality of the former is inferior to the latter, perhaps because of the difficulty in working the hard basalt stone indigenous to the northern part of the country. The houses of the wealthy and synagogues were decorated with wall paintings adorned with floral and geometric patterns, remnants of which were discovered in Sepphoris and Gamla and *in situ* in Yodefat and Magdala. First-century C.E. mosaics resembling those known in Judea have been found to date in the synagogue at Magdala only, whereas isolated *tesserae* in the first-century C.E. layers at Sepphoris attest to their use in the urban realm.

Small quantities of imported and luxury wares originating outside the Galilee were found in the cities and villages. In her work on Jewish life in the Galilee on the eve of the Great Revolt, Berlin indicates a decline in the number of imported *terra sigillata* A ware (ESA), which, she attests, exhibits a change in dining ware used by the Jewish villagers owing to their anti-Roman stance in the first century C.E. (Berlin 2005, 442–448; 2011, 69–106). Her conclusions are based on an interpretation of the finds from the rural realm, and, even there, the picture is not consistent. Comparing the finds from Yodefat to those from Gamla, one may conclude that the variable quantities of types were dependent upon the local inhabitants' preferences or on changes in inter-settlement commerce (Adan-Bayewitz and Aviam 1997, 165; Berlin 2006, 21–23). Some imported vessels found in Sepphoris, and possibly also in Tiberias, suggest that the situation in the cities may have been slightly different in this regard from that in the villages, although at this stage of the research it is difficult to determine decisively the quantitative ratio between the various types of vessels.

The various types of glassware found in the Galilee, similar to those known in the gentile settlements, include bowls, beakers, jugs, and miniature bottles, as well as beads and rings. Most of the early vessels are known from the Galilean periphery and some from sites in the heart of the Jewish settlement (Kahane 1961, 128–143; Ovadiah 2000, 37*–41*; Winter 2004, 20–24). These were blown glass vessels, including those transferred to molds; their forms resembled the types known along the Phoenician coast and elsewhere.

The artistic finds from the Galilee are meager and therefore it is difficult to determine the nature of the local art in the first century C.E. Nevertheless, the avoidance of figural (animal and human) images was especially pronounced. Josephus mentions that Herod Antipas's palace in Tiberias was decorated with figural images, but the consent of the city's leaders ultimately to destroy it, as well as Jesus', son of Sapphias, prompt execution of his task, allude to the fact that Antipas deviated from the accepted practice among the Jews (*Life* 65–69). Neither the coins issued in first-century Galilee nor the wall paintings, mosaics, architectural decorations, and small finds known to date throughout the region bear any figural images; instead they were adorned with only floral or geometric motifs. The Galileans, like the Jerusalemites, followed the narrow interpretation of the Second Commandment and, as evinced by the archaeological finds, avoided depicting humans and animals, which at that time were dominant motifs in Greco-Roman art (Levine 2012, 45–65).

10.6 Conclusion

The archaeological finds from the Galilee suggest that the local population kept a homogeneous Jewish identity. Even if only one component was meant to fulfill a particular need while another aimed to perform a different practice, the combination of these elements are indicative of an accepted societal behavior characterizing the Jewish Galilee of the first century C.E. Some of these elements—whether ritual baths or soft limestone vessels for purification or the existence of a synagogue in a city or village for congregating on the Sabbath to read or study the scriptures—were meant to fill a personal or communal need deriving from maintaining a Jewish lifestyle. Other matters relating to daily life in the private sphere, such as cooking vessels and storage jars, “Herodian lamps,” and some other utensils, reflect prevalent practices in Galilean life that did not necessarily derive from a religious need or a halakhic motive. In contrast, the significant presence of Jewish coins in Galilean currency related to local or interregional commercial needs may well have served as a conspicuous signal of Jewish identity as well as aspirations for political autonomy. The Galileans' desire to keep one or another custom may have emerged from a variety of reasons, but appears to have been a consistent choice in order to preserve their ancestral customs that dictated their lifestyle—the rural public buildings, the interior design of their dwellings and installations—but also to distinguish themselves consciously from their surroundings by avoiding figural art and preferring local products over those manufactured by gentiles.

Material remains also tell us that the Galileans did not readily dismiss all foreign elements, but in fact easily accommodated some of them; this stands in contrast to their wider acceptance by Jews in a later period. The presence of

non-Jewish elements demonstrates the beginning of a process whereby Greco-Roman culture was penetrating the Galilean Jewish realm, albeit to varying degrees. Its first signs were evident in the private realm, and besides Tiberias, which was founded as a Greco-Roman *polis*, the expression of foreign influence in the public sphere in the Galilean settlements before the revolt was less profound.

The various aspects of Jewish life mentioned above suggest that Galilean Jews shared various customs with their Jerusalem counterparts. The differences spelled out in the above discussion relate primarily to form and not so much to their content, and one certainly cannot question the conclusion emerging from a comparison of the material remains from both regions, that the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of the Jews in the Galilee and Judea in the first century C.E. were quite homogeneous (Stemberger 2001, 189–208). Settlement patterns in both regions were similar as well and find expression primarily in those matters that can be defined as Jewish in nature or used by Jews, but also in some other spheres of culture influenced by their Greco-Roman surroundings.

The archaeological finds from the Galilee, in both city and village, and from one site to the next, paint a complex picture, yet they allow us to ascertain the lifestyle of the local inhabitants. The bulk of evidence is Jewish in nature and attests to the religious, ethnic, cultural, and social identity of the Galilean population in the period under discussion. Despite the separatist approach of most of the inhabitants in the region, expressed by the preference for the local production of goods over foreign ones, the cultural boundaries between the Jews and their gentile neighbors were not entirely ironclad.

With the suppression of the revolt in the Galilee in 67 C.E., after Yodfat (Josephus, *War* 3.141–339) and Gamla (Josephus, *War* 4.1–83) were destroyed and Gush Halav (Gischala; Josephus, *War* 4.92–120) surrendered to the Romans, the Jewish insurgence in the region waned and eventually disappeared. The damage in the Galilee was limited, while life in most settlements that did not actively participate in the revolt continued unscathed, but now it was under the vigilant eye of the Roman soldiers stationed in this part of the country. Excavations and archaeological surveys conducted throughout the Galilee indicate a continuation in settlement at most sites from the first to second centuries C.E. without any disturbances caused by the revolt (Ben-David 2005, 79–89; Leibner 2009, 341–345). Seniority in the Galilee now belonged to Sepphoris—“Eirenopolis” (the “City of Peace”)—and was followed by other settlements that came to accept Roman rule.

The rehabilitation of Jewish society after the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, and its recovery from the ravages of war, were made possible in no small measure by the stability of the Galilean settlements to which Judean refugees had fled. In the new reality, Jewish settlement in the Galilee continued to exist and even flourish with its extended geographic,

demographic, and constructional boundaries. A new spirit would now resuscitate it and have a long-lasting impact on the architecture, art, and cultural patterns of the local population. The building of Sepphoris as a Roman city at the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries C.E. attests to the change taking place in the Galilee vis-à-vis Rome and its culture at this time and in the subsequent era. The beginnings of this change are evident already in the first century C.E., but this process would spread in the coming centuries to a wide range of areas and would become stronger among various sectors of the population. The archaeological finds from the Galilee provide important information on how the Jewish population conducted its affairs in the first centuries of the Common Era, in a time of transition and change, but a discussion of this fascinating episode in Jewish history must be reserved for another occasion.

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CHAPTER 11

Josephus as a Military Historian

Jonathan P. Roth

11.1 Introduction

In the past, Josephus has suffered from a poor reputation as a military historian. This view has gradually changed, however, as scholars have recognized that Josephus was a highly educated, intelligent, and critical historian, and this general appreciation has extended to his writing on war. Naturally, a historian needs to treat the works of any source critically, but hyper-skepticism of Josephus, especially on military matters, is becoming less common. To some extent, Josephus's poor reputation stems from a paucity of study. There has been a general lack of attention to Josephus as a military historian among students of Josephus, Roman warfare, and military history in general. In fact, as a military historian, Josephus compares very favorably with the other major military writers of the Roman period, and he deserves much more attention, not simply as a source of facts about ancient warfare, but as an experienced and critical writer on military affairs. This chapter is not an attempt to comprehensively present all of the military elements in Josephus's writings, but is intended as an introduction and as an invitation to further study.

11.2 Josephus as an Eyewitness to War

In his chronicle of the Jewish War (66–73 C.E.), *Judean War*, Josephus's description is clearly influenced by Thucydides, not only for military vocabulary, as will be seen, but for the idea that history should be contemporary and based on the critical analysis of eyewitness testimony (on *Judean War*, see [Chapter 1](#) by Mason in this volume). Josephus made an effort to seek out reliable information about the conflict, even if this was to be incorporated into a literary portion of his work. An example of this is Agrippa II's speech in *Judean War* 2.34–405, in which Josephus sets out accurately the Roman military garrisons around the Empire. In most cases, Josephus's account of the course of the Jewish War is straightforward. Indeed, he is more punctilious about giving relevant dates than most ancient military historians.

Before the war began, Josephus had no military experience or training

whatsoever. Some commentators overrate the importance of professional military training, both in the practice of war and in writing about it. There is much cogent military writing done by those who have never served in the military, for example, that of John Keegan, considered by many the premier military historian of recent years. Many military forces have been led effectively by men with no prior military experience: the Haitian François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture (ca. 1743–1803), the Chinese Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), the Filipino Emilio Aguinaldo (1869–1964), and perhaps most notably, Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), a Russian-Jewish intellectual with absolutely no military training or experience, who organized and led the Bolsheviks' Red Army to victory in the Russian civil war (1917–1922).

The Romans themselves drew their military leaders from the aristocracy during most of their period of imperial expansion. The military training of such nobles was traditionally informal, carried out through the socialization of youth by those with a military background, and through the reading of military literature of various types. As a young Jewish aristocrat, Josephus may well have benefitted from conversations with those who had fought in the Herodian and Roman armies. It was natural that in times of crisis, political and military leaders were drawn from the Jewish elite. It thus becomes less surprising that those individuals who led the Jewish revolt in 66 appointed Josephus to a leadership role in Galilee, a key military region.

The role that Josephus played in the insurgency obviously affected his historical writing. The finished *Judean War* in Greek could not have been published before 75 (when the Temple of Peace, which he mentions, was constructed), so naturally, the work takes Roman victory in the Jewish War for granted. Even though Josephus's account is more detailed than most, there are several portions of *Judean War*, for example, his accounts of the Galilee campaign, that are difficult to follow, and at times these are contradictory. This may reflect the fact that insurgencies are notoriously complex. There is a marked tendency, both among participants and historians, to simplify events along the lines of a commonly agreed narrative as time goes on. Scholars have offered many reasons, some quite compelling, for these discrepancies between *Judean War* and *Life*, but the tendency to simplify may account for some (though not all) of the them (see [Chapters 1](#) and [3](#) by Mason in this volume).

The fact that he was an eyewitness to, and in some cases a participant in, the conflict is the most significant aspect of Josephus's narrative of the Jewish War (cf. Goldsworthy 2014, 208). Josephus was in a position to personally witness the early stages of the conflict from the insurgent perspective and in its latter stages from the Roman one. Josephus's defection to the Romans has attracted a great deal of (perhaps too much) scholarly attention. Changing sides during an insurgency, or indeed a conventional war, has not been uncommon in history and there are numerous examples. Whether or not this

changing of sides reflects poorly or positively on Josephus's character is to a large extent a political and ethical, not an historical, issue. His defection has been used, however, to cast aspersions on Josephus's veracity as a historian in general, and as a military historian in particular. There is no doubt that Josephus attempts to justify his behavior during the war, but this is common, one might say ubiquitous, when an individual writes about his or her military experiences. Certainly, some part of Josephus's motivation was to discredit certain individuals, such as John of Gischala, and praise others, such as Titus. This too has been part of military history writing from its beginnings, and continues to be. Josephus certainly intended his military writings, especially *Judean War*, as a defense of his own military career. This sort of thing is also not unusual, especially with the writings of participants in insurgencies and civil wars.

11.3 Josephus's Sources and Use of Numbers

Judean War is not only useful as a narrative of the Jewish War: historians use it to reconstruct the Roman military, for example, Roman unit organization and rank structure. As discussed below, Josephus seems to use contemporary military terminology, and despite some slips, his information corresponds well with archaeological, epigraphical, and other textual evidence. Those who are skeptical of Josephus as a military expert might prefer other sources to him, but this approach is questionable. For example, there is a contradiction between Josephus's reported numbers for torsion artillery (*War* 3.166) and those reported in Vegetius, the compiler of a later Roman military manual (*Mil.* 2.25). While some have preferred the latter, a military historian could make the argument that Josephus's figure is more reliable, at least for the first century C.E.

Josephus does not generally tell us whether he was an eyewitness to a particular event or drew knowledge of it from a source or sources. At times we know where Josephus was; for example, after his capture at Jotapata, he could not have seen the military actions he portrays. On the other hand, he was certainly present at the siege of Jerusalem in 70. Many times, however, we need to guess. Even when he was not present, however, Josephus might well have gotten first-hand information about the war, both from deserters and from his Roman guards. In *Judean War* 5.248–251, Josephus gives the size of the various insurgent forces besieged in Jerusalem, and his source, unless he is inventing these out of whole cloth, must ultimately have been Jewish survivors. The extent to which Josephus sought out and drew information from participants on both sides has perhaps been underestimated. His account of the siege of Masada, for example, may well have stemmed from a conversation with one or more Roman veterans and perhaps even a Jewish

survivor.

The Roman commander, and later emperor, Vespasian wrote a military memoir, known in Latin as *commentarii*, and in several cases the use of this source by Josephus is evident. The Jewish historian also used the memoirs of King Herod (*Ant.* 15.174), as well as correspondence with King Herod Agrippa II. In addition, one can assume that he gathered information, both in the case of *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities* through letters and by interviewing survivors. We have an example of correspondence from historians to military commanders in the case of Fronto, who corresponded with both Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius about the Parthian campaign of 161–166 C.E. In such memoirs, letters, and interviews, Josephus would have found much military detail, although its reliability would, of course, vary. An example is in *Judean War* 4.659–663, Titus's march from Egypt to Judaea, which is clearly based on a Roman military source.

Since the size and organization of military forces have such an important role in understanding war, the question of numbers plays an especially significant role in military writing. Hans Delbrück (1900), the first modern military historian, applied the idea of *Sachkritik*, the careful analysis of the text with reference to the physical world, specifically to critique the numbers found in ancient military sources. This analysis led him to reject many of the figures found in the portrayal of ancient battles. Subsequently, military historians have been more willing to accept ancient versions of the size of military forces, although there remain many that are clearly unbelievable, such as Herodotus's famous statement that the Persian army that invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E. had 1,700,000 soldiers in it (*Hist.* 7.60). An army of well over a million men, however, could not possibly have been fed and moved, given the limits of ancient logistics. This is the essence of *Sachkritik*.

Certainly some of Josephus's figures are incredible. In *Judean War* 6.420ff., Josephus lists his most problematic figures. He claims that at the siege of Jerusalem alone there were 97,000 captured and 1,100,000 dead. He clearly realizes this is an incredible figure, and is at pains to defend it. Josephus writes that the army of the Armenian king, Tigranes II, that invaded Judea was 300,000 (or in a variant 500,000) men (*Ant.* 13.419). While these numbers given by Josephus clearly do not reflect reality, to be fair, the exaggeration of numbers is a feature of much writing about war, even in modern times.

Jonathan Price (1992) is skeptical even of plausible numbers given by Josephus. His point is that if Josephus could get large numbers wrong, then he could be incorrect with his small ones. There is a certainly something to be said for this argument. Nevertheless, even in modern times, it is difficult to estimate the numbers of troops, especially if they are irregulars. In the final analysis, one should apply to Josephus the same standard that is used in reconstructing all military history. No doubt, the numerous inconsistencies in

Josephus's numbers are a challenge for military historians. Yet this is not a reason to reject such numbers out of hand and each should be critically judged on an individual basis. Josephus himself is aware that military historians give different numbers for the size of the same army, something he notes at *Judean Antiquities* 13.337 and 13.344. Standing military forces usually keep careful records of the exact numbers of soldiers present, as well as those killed and captured in battle. This is necessary for accounting purposes. Some records for the Roman army have survived, and one pay record, found at Masada, dates to the Roman siege of that fortress at the end of the Jewish War. At least some of Josephus's figures on the size of the Roman military forces were probably based on official documents.

11.4 Literary Theory and the Military Historian

Literary theory has had an impact on our understanding of Josephus as a military historian. *Topoi* play a significant role in the analysis of ancient military writing, including that of Josephus. A *topos* is a theme or description that is repeated through a literary tradition. Classicists who study these military texts in their original Latin and Greek sometimes interpret the presence of a *topos* as an indication of a rhetorical invention by the author rather than an underlying reality. An example of how *topoi* are interpreted is Josephus's picture of the mass suicide (or rather the murder-suicides) at Masada in Book 7 of the *Judean War*. The fact that such suicides feature in previous historical and literary accounts of sieges has been used to throw doubt on Josephus's account. From the point of view of military writing, the repetition of a theme, or a description, even in similar or identical words, does not necessarily reflect on the historicity of an event. Some aspects of war, for example, the starvation that often accompanies long sieges, feature in many narratives, but nevertheless reflect an underlying reality. Many sources depict panicked soldiers fleeing like a herd of frightened animals. This is also a *topos*, but is in fact how such a rout looks to an observer. In the case of the Masada mass murder-suicide, such a gruesome event is in fact congruent with the reaction of cult-like groups threatened with destruction or perceived destruction. This is illustrated in the modern examples of the self-immolation of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, in 1993, and the mass suicide (or rather, as at Masada, the murder-suicides) of the Peoples Temple cult at Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978.

Many of Josephus's battle narratives are vivid, and while some scholars take this as a sign of rhetorical influence, they certainly can be read as eyewitness accounts, for example, the confusion and intensity of hand-to-hand combat in *Judean War* 6.75–92. Josephus also portrays a Roman attack on the temple that occurred in the latter stages of the siege of Jerusalem (*War* 6.689); it

certainly has flourishes, but reads like an eyewitness account. This is true of many elements of the Jerusalem siege: in *Judean War* 6.136–148, Josephus depicts the back-and-forth of fighting as being like a “stage play” but given the details, this is to be a convincing account of an actual battle. Of course, a vivid description is not necessarily a true one, and a skilled writer can fabricate a seemingly eyewitness account. Skill in writing, however, should not be confused with fictionalization, and these battle accounts should not be dismissed out of hand as merely literary exercises.

Indeed, Josephus’s narratives can help in the difficult matter of reconstructing the details of ancient combat. His report on the siege of Jotapata in *Judean War* 3.161–328 is very detailed in terms of the mechanics of siegeworks and engines. The battering ram (Latin *aries*, Greek *krios*) is frequently mentioned in accounts of ancient sieges, but Josephus is one of the few who describes how it actually worked (*War* 3.214–219). This type of detailed portrayal is not confined to the battles he actually witnessed: in *Judean Antiquities* 14.441–444, he gives a detailed description of how an ambush was set up and executed by the Parthians on a Roman force led by Mark Antony (and how Herod and the Jewish troops saved the day). Military historians need to critically read and interpret Josephus, but will find that with all of his rhetorical flourishes, many of his depictions of battles are as good as any found in ancient military historians and they are well worth study.

Josephus intersperses his description of historical events with long rhetorical speeches, which are, in large part, of his own invention. Historians debate the purpose of such speeches in ancient military historical works, but it is clear that Josephus uses them to present his own spin on events (see [Chapter 5](#) by Mason on Josephus as a Roman historian in this volume). Speeches, however, can contain important military information. The clearest example is the roster of the Roman army presented in Agrippa II’s speech, already mentioned, reporting the stationing of Roman legions in 74 (Saulnier 1989). Also, in a speech attributed to Vespasian, for example, Josephus has him say that a victory won by not fighting is as distinguished as one accomplished by combat (*War* 4.373).

Josephus writes not only about contemporary military history, since in both *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities* he covers wars and conflicts of the Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Herodian periods. In these sections, Josephus is influenced by Polybius and his idea of “pragmatic history” that sets out both what happened, and why. Josephus differs from Polybius and Thucydides in emphasizing the Jewish view that God is the ultimate cause of victory or defeat (e.g., *War* 3.293; *Ant.* 15.145). This focus on God’s will, however, does not prevent Josephus from giving a complex political and military report on the decline of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires, and of the complex fighting of the mini-states and warlords that grew as their authority collapsed. The same parallel account covers the period of the Roman Civil Wars and

illustrates the role that client kingdoms and provincials played in it.

Although Josephus was clearly highly educated, he deprecates his knowledge of Greek and he refers to collaborators (*synergoi*) playing a large role in his writing (*Apion* 1.50; *Ant.* 1.7; 20.263). The evidence of their work is apparent in various parts of the text, but they were by no means ghostwriters (see Rajak 1983, 233–236; see [Chapter 5](#) by Mason in this volume). From the point of view of judging Josephus as a military writer, the question is to what extent the *synergoi* influenced his writing on war. There are certainly military passages in which Josephus borrows vocabulary from Greek military literature, especially Thucydides, although it is possible that this is drawn from his own reading, or even that such expressions have passed into general literary usage. Recent scholarship has stressed that Josephus was fluent in Greek, and in fact it may have been one of his native languages (Redondo 2000). In any case, we can see that Josephus used Greek military terminology in a way that indicates a great deal of familiarity with it.

11.5 Military Terminology in Josephus

Josephus certainly was influenced by the literary and rhetorical conventions of his time. Good Greek (and Latin) historical style in the first century discouraged the use of technical terminology, especially repetitively. On the other hand, Josephus seems to be careful with his technical wording. An example would be Josephus's use of the Greek word *tagma* to mean a Roman legion. The term *tagma* is not used at all in Thucydides, and is rarely used in classical Greek in a military sense. It appears in Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.1.1), denoting a division or body of regular troops, and is also used in this sense in Hellenistic papyri from Ptolemaic Egypt. Polybius, writing in the second century B.C.E., uses the term *stratopedon*, which, in classical Greek, means a military camp, in order to refer to a Roman legion. The Greek philosopher Onasander wrote his *Strategika*, a work on generalship in the middle of the first century C.E., and used *tagma* in the Hellenistic sense. *Tagma*, however, is very commonly used in contemporary Greek inscriptions and texts as a translation for the term “legion.” It is clear that its use in Josephus is based on experience and not on literary models. While he uses *tagma* to mean both “legion” and “Legion” (i.e., to refer to a specific one), the word is also used in other senses, of course. Interestingly enough, Josephus uses *tagma* to refer to the Essene “order” (*War* 2.122, 143, 160; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). There may not be any military connection to the use of this term, though it is interesting that the medieval term *schola*, used to refer to a monastic order, and the Sanskrit word *sangha*, a community of monks, both derive from words for military units.

Understanding Josephus's use of military Greek is important in correctly

translating and understanding his work. For example, in describing the march of Vespasian into Galilee, Josephus uses the term *speirôn eparchoi* to refer to the individuals leading each cohort on the march (*War* 3.122). Thackeray (1927) and Williamson (1959) translate that as “prefects of the cohorts” using the normal Roman Greek meaning of the words. Yet legionary cohorts (in contrast to auxiliary ones) were not commanded by prefects. The senior officer assigned to a legionary cohort was the senior centurion, the *primuspilus*, and this must be the individual Josephus is referring to. Following Rengstorf (1975, 1983), scholars rightly translate *speirôn eparchoi* as “commanders of the cohorts.”

Josephus is an important source for our understanding of military forces other than the Roman ones. In *Judean Antiquities*, for example, he discusses the militaries of the Hellenistic states, especially those of the Seleucids and Ptolemies. He gives an account of the development of a mini-state created by two Jewish warlords in Babylonia (*Ant.* 18.314–317), and he also provides details of the Parthian army (*Ant.* 18.318–339; 20.86). Although he covers the Hasmonean period, there is little military detail, which is certainly a reflection of his sources (see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz and [Chapter 13](#) by Gruen in this volume). On the other hand, although little attention has been paid to it, Josephus gives us a great deal of information about the organization of Herodian military forces (see Shatzman 1991). Agrippa II’s army played an important role in the Jewish War, which is reflected in Josephus’s text. As was the case with the forces of other client kings, there were no doubt ethnic Roman, or Romanized foreigners, serving among the soldiers, and especially the officers of the Royal Army of the Jewish kings. Many Jews during the first century, however, bore Greek and Latin names, and this was doubtless true of Herodian officers as well.

In addition to his discussion of Roman and pro-Roman forces, Josephus gives us a great deal of information about the rebel forces. Josephus attributes Jewish success over Roman discipline to their daring (*War* 5.121–122, 285, 306, 485; 6.13–14). It is noteworthy that Josephus makes no attempt to hide their lack of success in what is supposed to be their greatest area of strength. An often dismissed claim of Josephus (in *War* 2.577–584) is that, as a rebel general, he trained his forces “in the Roman fashion.” While his figure of 10,000 men under his command is not credible, the model of Roman discipline would have been widely known and could have been learned, for example from handbooks and historical accounts of Roman military campaigns. Josephus writes that he copied Roman ranks and units, and he certainly understood the importance of centurions in the Roman system. Josephus explains what he taught (or wanted to teach) his soldiers: for example, how to follow trumpet calls in action and how to maneuver in units. Whatever the truth of Josephus’s attempt, his portrayal of it reveals his understanding of war.

Josephus's digression on the Roman army (*War* 3.70–109) provides the classic description of the Imperial army, as Polybius does for its Republican counterpart. In addition to giving many details of training, the marching camp, torsion artillery, armaments, tactics, and daily routine, Josephus stresses the importance of training and discipline. He notes the importance of what we would call “morale,” which he terms “fortitude of the soul” (*tas psychas alkimous*) (*War* 3.102). His line about the importance and strenuousness of Roman training (*War* 3.75) has become a classic: “It would not be wrong to describe their maneuvers as bloodless combats and their combats as sanguinary maneuvers” (trans. Thackeray, LCL). That Roman success derived from training and discipline is a constant theme in Josephus, for example, in *Judean War* 2.577, where he notes that this discipline and training made the Romans invincible. This is, of course, a commonplace of ancient (and modern) writing about the Roman military, emphasized by authors both before Josephus, such as Polybius and Onasander, and those after, for example, Vegetius. The fact is, however, that this view of discipline is not merely a matter of literary convention, but a reflection of an underlying reality.

However, there is one detail in his picture of the Roman military that has raised questions about Josephus's familiarity with this subject. In *Judean War* 3.94, he writes that a Roman soldier wore a sword (*xiphos*) on either side, but says one is longer than the other, clearly indicating that the *gladius* or short sword was worn on the left side, and the dagger (in Latin *pugio*) was worn on the right. As Thackeray notes (1927, 604–605 n. a), all our pictorial evidence show the *gladius* being carried on the legionary's right side. This reversal is probably, as some have suggested, simply a careless slip. Even an experienced war correspondent might not remember if an American soldier has his divisional patch on the right or left shoulder. (It is worth noting that Roman centurions wore their *gladius* on the left side, so perhaps this is what Josephus was thinking of.) In any case, Josephus's picture of Roman military equipment and practice has been borne out as accurate.

The American general Omar Bradley is supposed to have said, “Amateurs study tactics, professionals study logistics.” It is striking that Josephus pays more attention to issues of transportation and supply than most ancient (or even modern) historians (e.g., *War* 1.297–300; see Roth 1999). At one point, Josephus notes that water is the most vital supply for a military force (*Ant.* 15.200). As obvious as this seems, military writers often fail to fully appreciate the impact of the need for water on military movements.

Josephus's awareness of the importance of logistics possibly results from his personal experiences as a military leader, as it certainly was not part of anyone's education in antiquity. Intelligence and counter-intelligence also play a role in his writing (*War* 1.321), another area that military historians sometimes ignore. Josephus can be sloppy with logistical details, however: he

gives different equivalents for the Hebrew *kor* and the Athenian *medimnos*, both measures of grain in *Judean Antiquities* 3.321 and 15.314, and both are incorrect.

11.6 War in *Judean Antiquities*

Judean War is not the only treatment of war in Josephus's writings. The first part of the *Judean Antiquities* is a Greek paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible. By leaving out most of the laws and prophets, as well as the psalms and proverbs, Josephus creates a narrative of Israelite history that is as political and military as religious. Josephus also puts a military spin on his version of biblical events, for example, portraying Abraham, not only as a lawgiver and prophet but as a skillful and successful general (*Ant.* 1.171–178; Feldman 1984; see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). In the Hebrew and Septuagint versions of Genesis 32:6, Esau brings four hundred men to a meeting with his brother Isaac. In Josephus's version (*Ant.* 1.327), they become his soldiers (*hoplitai*). At other points, Josephus refers to Hebrew soldiers (*hoplitai*) when the corresponding term is missing in the Bible (*Ant.* 5.93).

Judean Antiquities portrays Moses as a military leader and *stratêgos*. In *Judean Antiquities* 2.238–253, Josephus relates a legend, not present in the Bible or Septuagint, of Moses leading an army to defend Egypt against an Ethiopian invasion. In order to surprise the enemy, Moses takes a route through a scorpion-infested desert, bringing ibises (a type of bird) along with him to eat the deadly arthropods. He surprises and destroys the Ethiopian army. The war is ended when the daughter of the Ethiopian king, impressed by Moses's ingenuity and courage in battle, falls in love with him. In Josephus's version of the Exodus, Moses is presented, and referred to, as a general (*stratêgos*) (e.g., *Ant.* 2.268; 3.102) and the Children of Israel as an army, *stratos* (e.g., *Ant.* 3.4, 40), *stratia* (e.g., *Ant.* 3.99), or *stratopedon* (e.g., *Ant.* 4.11).

When God commands Moses to hand over the leadership to Joshua (Num. 27:18), Josephus adds that this includes both “prophetical functions” (*propheteia*) and being the general (*stratêgos*) (*Ant.* 4.165), and when Moses gives his farewell speech in Deuteronomy 1:1, Josephus has him address the Hebrews as “comrades in arms” (*systratriôtai*) (*Ant.* 4.177.). Deuteronomy 20.10–20 recounts the Hebrew law of war. Where the biblical text and the Septuagint says, “God is with you” in battle, Josephus says that God is the Hebrews “commander-in-chief” (*stratêgos autokratôr*) (*Ant.* 4.297). There are instances in which Josephus adds military details to the biblical text: for example, in his version of the crossing of the Red Sea (*Ant.* 2.324), he repeats the Bible's figure of 600 Egyptian chariots, but adds that there were 50,000 horsemen and 200,000 infantry. This passage gives not only impossibly high

numbers, but also contains a potential anachronism if one were to date an Exodus to the Late Bronze Age, as cavalry did not appear until after 1000 B.C.E. In his paraphrase of Deuteronomy 20:19 regarding laws of war, Josephus adds: “Beware, above all in battle, that no woman assume the accoutrements of a man nor man the apparel of a women.” (*Ant.* 4.301; trans. Thackeray, LCL). While we cannot be sure, this might be an early reference to the practice of women dressing as men to fight, known in various modern conflicts, such as the American Civil War. In *Judean War* 4.561–562, Josephus refers to Jewish rebels dressing as women. Such cross-dressing has been noted in modern insurgencies—for example, in the Congo and Syria—though it is generally done to disguise armed men.

We can also learn something about Josephus’s use of military vocabulary from *Judean Antiquities*. In *Judean War*, Josephus uses the term *thureos* (e.g., *War* 2.537; 4.290), which normally refers to a long oblong or rectangular shield, but he never uses *aspis*, the term for a round shield. This may be a reflection of the shape of the shields he is describing, or perhaps he uses the former term just to mean “shield.” This is generally true in *Judean Antiquities*, the exception being at 8.291, where he uses *aspis* to translate the Hebrew term *magen*, which can mean either a shield, in general, or a buckler, or small round shield (2 Chron. 14:8). There are cases in which *thureos* does mean a large shield. Josephus, along with the Septuagint, translates the Hebrew *zinnah*, a large shield, with *thureos* (*Ant.* 7.55).

The Alexandrian Jewish writer Philo (ca. 20 B.C.E. to 50 C.E.) presented Jewish law in Greek philosophical terms, and in a similar way Josephus not only translated biblical stories but presented them in Greek terms, and, in the case of warfare, in Greek military terms. After the Israelites defeat the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8–15), for example, Josephus adds a victory celebration in which the Hebrews Moses “led them forward in ordered ranks” (*proêge suntetagmenous*), using Greek military terminology (*Ant.* 3.61; trans. Thackeray, LCL). In the story of the Hebrews’ rebellion against Moses and Joshua, told in Numbers 14–16, Josephus adds an explanation lacking in the biblical text: “However, just as large armies (*stratopeda*), especially after reverses, are wont to become ungovernable and insubordinate, even so it fell out with the Jews” (*Ant.* 4.11; trans. Thackeray, LCL). Here, Josephus is echoing the sentiments and vocabulary of Thucydides (7.80), whose influence is also apparent in Josephus’s description of a battle with the Sihon, King of the Amorites. The biblical narrative of this battle is only a few sentences (Num. 21:23–25), but Josephus expands it to some fifty lines. His report, in which the Amorites are parched with thirst and harassed by Hebrew slingers and light infantry, is modeled on Thucydides’ account of the Athenian defeat at Syracuse (7.82ff.) The same is true of other battle scenes, which are expanded from the Hebrew, and have vocabulary drawn from Thucydides, for example, the defeat of the Benjaminites (Judges 21.1ff; *Ant.* 5.155–165; cf.

Thuc. 2.81), and the battle between the forces of Joab and Abner (*Ant.* 7.10–17), and elsewhere (*Ant.* 7.122–126, 215–221; 9.31–43). It should be noted that the use of one or two Thucydidean terms may reflect common usage rather than direct borrowing.

Josephus was older when writing *Judean Antiquities* and had more distance from his military experience during the Jewish War. In this work, he makes a number of interesting asides about war. For example, in discussing Saul, Josephus writes:

[M]en who have gone forth to war with high hopes, thinking to conquer and return in safety are, to my mind, mistakenly described as valiant (*andreious*) by the historians ... Certainly it is just that those too receive approbation ... On the other hand, to harbor in one's heart no hope of success, but to know beforehand that one must die and die fighting, and then not to fear nor be appalled at this terrible fate ... that, in my judgment, is proof of true valor (*andreiou alêthôs*).

(*Ant.* 6.346–348; trans. Thackeray, LCL)

Judean Antiquities relies on a number of Greek sources, some of which no longer survive, and others, such as the First Book of Maccabees, that do (see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz in this volume). There is relatively little information about the Persian period, but a lot of description of the political and military events of the Hellenistic Near East. Josephus, at times relying on no longer available sources, is a valuable addition to Polybius in our understanding also of late Hellenistic and Roman Republican military history. For example, he tells of an otherwise unattested siege of Jerusalem in 134 B.C.E. (*Ant.* 13.236–248) by Antiochus VII Sidetes (r. 138–129 B.C.E.).

11.7 Conclusion

One can expect that in the future, there will be more studies of Josephus from a military perspective. Scholars of war have begun to intensively study rebellions and revolutions, and the attempts to suppress them, under the terms “insurgency” and “counterinsurgency,” and this promises to focus more attention on the Jewish War. The United States Army Field Service Manual, entitled *Counterinsurgency* (Petraeus and Amos 2006), notes that “every insurgency is contextual” but adds that all such actions “use variations of standard themes” and advises the use of historical material to understand them. A critical study of Josephus’s military terminology, especially with regard to the Jewish rebel forces, could elucidate the nature of the insurgents’ armies and the course of the war.

Indeed, there remains a broad and open field for future scholarship on

Josephus as a military historian. For example, an in-depth examination of Josephus's use of military terminology that includes both the *Judean Antiquities* and a comprehensive study of the plausibility of Josephus's figures would be very useful. Much can be gleaned from Josephus's descriptions of battles and further investigation of his description of non-Roman forces, both in *Judean Antiquities* and *Judean War*. Josephus certainly deserves the same quantity, and quality, of scholarly attention that has been given to other ancient military writers, such as Polybius and Caesar.

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FURTHER READING

A good academic introduction to Josephus's military writings, as well as the Jewish War, is Jonathan Price's *Jerusalem Under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State 66–70 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Analysis can also be found in several of the chapters in Mladen Popovic's anthology, *The Jewish Revolt Against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). James J. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts Against Rome, A.D. 66-135: A Military Analysis* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010) is the best of a number of recent popular treatments. Adrian Goldworthy, "'Men Casually Armed against Fully Equipped Regulars': The Roman Military Response to Jewish Insurgency 63 BCE–135 CE," in *Jews and Christians in the First Centuries: How to Write Their History*, edited by Peter Tomson and Joshua Schwartz, 207–237

(Leiden: Brill, 2014), provides the best short account on the topic.

There is little on the military aspects of *Judean Antiquities*, outside of Louis Feldman, “Abraham the General in Josephus,” in *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* edited by Frederick E. Greenspahn, 43–49 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984).

CHAPTER 12

Josephus on Women

Tal Ilan

12.1 Introduction

Josephus did not devote any specific treatise to the subject of women. Sometimes, but not often, he made some general (usually disparaging) remarks about them, but we would be correct, I think, in stating that the topic was not of great interest to him. He was first and foremost a political historian, and, as such, wrote about what he conceived as historical, politically significant, events. If he encountered women in his sources, or if his personal knowledge of events he relates included women, he mentioned them. But since it is only fair to state that, because in most societies Josephus describes in his writings, foremost among them the Jewish society of his day, women played only minor and subordinate roles in the political culture and institutions, in Josephus's writings too, they are not prominent. In a traditional companion to Josephus, which would highlight the issues most prominent in Josephus's writing, no chapter on women would be solicited. In this *Companion to Josephus*, the inclusion of this chapter has more to do with the *Zeitgeist* than with Josephus's writings. Women at the time (as now) constituted half of the population, and visible or invisible, were part of the historical events related. Contemporary women and gender studies aim to make these women visible. It is also the aim of this chapter.

Since Josephus is an historian, and because he is quite unique as such in the scene of Jewish literature in antiquity, he is by far the most important source for any discussion of Jewish women who were historically and politically significant during the Second Temple period, both in Palestine and abroad. Thus, while he is not a particularly important source for exploring Jewish literary, legal, or philosophical concepts of women and womanhood (as are Philo, Ben Sira, or rabbinic literature), nor is he a very good source for women's social history (as are documentary papyri, inscriptions, and other archaeological finds), he is the foremost source for any information about female Jewish dignitaries in the biblical and post-biblical periods.

A meaningful division of Josephus's treatment of women turns out to be not based on the division of his writings, but is rather chronological. In his *Jewish Antiquities* 1–11, Josephus retells the biblical stories and often refers to the women mentioned therein. What he does in these retellings, and what this may teach us about his attitude to women, are the subject of the first part of

this study. In both his *Jewish Antiquities* Books 12–20 and in his *Jewish War* Books 1–2, Josephus relates the events of the Second Temple period, from the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great down to outbreak of the war against Rome in 66 C.E. For these events, Josephus is our primary source, though he was of course not an eyewitness to them. How he understood this period and how he related to the women who featured in it are discussed in the second part of this study. In his *Jewish War* Books 2–7, as well as in his *Life*, Josephus relates events to which he was an eyewitness. With the women mentioned in these texts, Josephus was often personally acquainted. The way he treats them forms the third part of this study. In the final section, I will try to draw some conclusions, based on the general statements Josephus makes here and there about women, including what he says in his apology for Judaism in *Against Apion*, and in his summation of the Jewish law in his *Jewish Antiquities* 2–4. In this section, I will also offer some conclusions about how Josephus’s writings contribute to the integration of women into Jewish history.

12.2 Josephus on Biblical Women

In his *Jewish Antiquities* 1–10 (and also part of 11), although he claims to be writing history, Josephus is actually engaging in a genre that we would otherwise designate as the “re-written Bible,” namely he relates (in Greek) for a contemporary (occasionally non-Jewish) audience the stories of the Bible (on Josephus and the Bible, see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). The changes he makes, as he deviates from the biblical narrative, are, it is assumed, motivated by his *Sitz-im-Leben* and can often tell us something about the author and his cultural setting. In this, Josephus’s writings can be subsumed under the same literary category as Jubilees and Pseudo-Philo. And, indeed, scholars who study Josephus’s Books 1–11 of *Jewish Antiquities* are often biblical and literature scholars rather than those who describe themselves foremost as historians, and they often study them in parallel to one of these other compositions (for parallels on the subject of women in Josephus and Pseudo-Philo, see Brown 1992).

In general, we can describe Josephus’s attitude to the Bible as faithful. He believed it described history as it happened and attempted to deviate from it as little as possible. Having stated this, I in a way will contradict and undermine the work of many scholars who read Josephus’s writings on the Bible closely and discover major and meaningful differences, which they, in turn, use to describe and assess Josephus’s aims, concerns, and prejudices, as well as his own integration into the Hellenistic-Roman culture of his day (e.g., Feldman 1998). My quarrel with these scholars is not on the concept but on the degree this happens. Reading Josephus’s retelling of the Bible continuously, I note

how closely he follows its major contours and how seldom he deviates from them—so much so, that most of the deviations scholars note and underline are mere omissions, and when he adds more information absent from the Bible, we usually associate this with his use of another supporting source, as is particularly evident when he retells women's stories.

The definitive study of Josephus on biblical women remains that of Betsy Halpern-Amaru, who suggested that Josephus tendentiously and consistently altered his positive feminine biblical characters because he considered many of the stories about them in the Bible to be problematic, usually because the heroines are too assertive. When he encounters this phenomenon, Josephus handles it employing three steps: "he (a) removes the 'problem'; (b) creates an unblemished heroine for his Hellenized audience; (c) ... transforms the 'potential flaw' in the heroine into [a] virtue ..." (Halpern-Amaru 1988, 144). This working hypothesis Halpern-Amaru employed to describe the characters of the matriarchs and then a large number of other biblical characters. Before and after her, many other studies have been written using a similar model (Feldman 1986; Bailey 1987; Levison 1991; Brown 1992; Sterling 1998). All these studies assume, with Halpern-Amaru, that the alterations of the portrayals of biblical women in Josephus are based on his pronounced Hellenization, and his attempt to tame and contain his biblical heroines in accordance with the Hellenistic concepts of his day.

The main assumption of this model (and these studies) is that the biblical account contains many details that present women as not consonant with the Hellenistic model of the pious, modest housewife and/or the over-sexualized temptress. These models are based, according to this thesis, on an inherent Hellenized misogyny. Yet this thesis often does not explain satisfactorily what Hellenism is exactly (and why these female role models are particularly Hellenistic), nor what Josephus does to biblical women. Let us take the biblical prophetess Deborah as an example (*Ant.* 5.200–209). In his 1986 article devoted to her character in Josephus, Feldman emphasizes the Hellenistic character of the narrative ("Josephus sets the scene for a Greek tragedy," Feldman 1986, 121) and concludes that Josephus, "in his misogyny, both reduced the length of the episode and the importance of Deborah" (Feldman 1986, 128). Yet in a similar study, Mark Ronacace came to a diametrically opposite conclusion. He states both that "in many respects Josephus' account ... is not too different from the biblical narrative" and that "Josephus' story shows no evidence of misogyny or an effort to reduce the importance of Deborah. Rather she is the most important positively depicted figure in this story" (Ronacace 2000, 259). Ronacace shows, I believe, that Feldman and Halpern-Amaru's conceptions can easily be turned on their head.

It seems to me that we should, therefore, look at the sizeable additions to Josephus's retelling of biblical stories on women, and search for the sources

in which he found them. We can begin with Esther, because this is the simplest case. There is no doubt that Josephus knew and used the Greek additions to Esther found in the Septuagint, which skim over some of the “problems” we find in the Hebrew Bible concerning the strange and not nearly as pious as expected character of the heroine (Feldman 1970). Most of the deviations found in Josephus’s retelling of Esther’s exploits (*Ant.* 11.184–296) derive from this source, which already eliminates what may be considered impious in the biblical narrative, and emphasizes Esther’s fear of God, but also her feminine allure.

In a similar vein we may investigate Josephus’s substantial expansion of the story about the daughters of Moab/Midian, who tempt the Israelites in the desert (*Ant.* 4.126–155). In this story, the sexual allure of these wicked women is emphasized, giving them a voice that they lack in the Bible (together with a voice to the men who commit idolatry with them). Yet here too the source of this expansion can easily be identified, since some of the story Josephus tells is already found in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (*Mos.* 2.292–299) (see van Unnik 1974). Since Josephus’s additions to this story are much more extensive than Philo’s, we may speculate that, while some of it is certainly to be attributed to Josephus’s creativity, the rest may be assigned to a Jewish novella composed in Hellenistic Egypt, similar to other such compositions by Josephus, which both he and Philo knew and used. One may assume that the story was originally told in order to tie together the story of Balaam in Numbers 25 and the obscure verse in Numbers 31:16, which mentions Balaam in association with the Israelite war against the Midianites. Such romances were probably a common literary exegetical genre in Jewish Alexandria in the Hellenistic Age, as is also the apocryphal composition *Joseph and Aseneth*, which is a very broadly expanded exegesis of one verse, Genesis 41:50.

This assumption is further based on the two other romantic expansions found in Josephus’s writing: Joseph resisting the temptations of Potiphar’s wife (*Ant.* 2.41–59), and Moses’s exploits in Ethiopia as prince of Egypt and his marriage to an Ethiopian princess (*Ant.* 2.238–253). The first of these two expansions has a close parallel in the apocryphal *Testament of Joseph* and the second in the writing of the Hellenistic-Jewish writer, Artapanus (Braun 1938, 90–104). This last story is also obviously an exegesis of a biblical verse, Numbers 12:1, where we hear of Moses’s Ethiopian wife.

It is true that all these additions, and some other alterations that Josephus makes in the way women are portrayed in the Bible, are based on a particular literary genre, and the genre is probably based on Hellenistic models, which scholars variously identify with Diodorus Siculus or Dionysius of Halicarnasus (see, e.g., Feldman 1998, 7–8). However, this is not because the Hellenistic models are inherently more misogynistic than the Bible, or require more pious or more sexually alluring women. Rather, it is because, in the

biblical stories, women are usually assertive and act unconventionally and have posed ethical and religious problems to all exegetes and interpreters over the centuries. Different methods have been developed to cope with these problems over time, most of them of a misogynistic character. The romance, popular in Hellenistic literature, and employed by Josephus as a source, can be understood more as an exegetical tool for him in his quest than as his own preferred answer to these problems.

12.3 Josephus on Hasmonean and Herodian Women

Book 12 of *Jewish Antiquities* begins immediately after Alexander the Great's conquests and consequently Books 12–20 are dominated by members of the two Jewish royal houses of Second Temple times, the Hasmoneans and Herodians (in this volume, see [Chapter 13](#) by Gruen on the Hasmoneans in Josephus and [Chapter 14](#) by van Henten on Herod the Great in Josephus). I have devoted a comprehensive study to women of these families (Ilan 1999, 85–125) and my findings are summed up here.

For his reports on both Herodian and Hasmonean women, Josephus is dependent on the writings of Herod's court historian Nicolaus of Damascus. Yet there is a significant difference between the way this historian reported the exploits of Hasmonean women and the way he reported the exploits of Herodian ones. For the former, he used historical documents, probably a chronicle of the dynasty now lost. The latter he knew personally, as he was an eyewitness to the events he described. This can be deduced from the fact that, aside from Queen Shelamzion, who was a queen in her own right, we know no names of Hasmonean women. This is probably because the chronicle Nicolaus used neglected to name the women in question. Nicolaus himself routinely named the Herodian women he wrote about, even when mentioned only in genealogical lists.

This absence, in my opinion, points to a particular sort of writing that endeavors to belittle and eliminate the presence of women from the historical scene. If 1 Maccabees, a book used by Josephus as a source for most of *Jewish Antiquities* 12 and 13, is any indication of the kind of source this Hasmonean chronicle was like, then the absence of women's names is the least of its faults. We know the Hasmonean brothers had a mother because Simon built a tomb for her (1 Macc. 13:28//*Ant.* 13.211; 1 Macc. mentions the mother specifically but Josephus only reports “parents”). We know Simon the Hasmonean had a daughter because 1 Maccabees reports that he had a son-in-law (1 Macc. 16:12//*Ant.* 13.228). The fact that Nicolaus found any women in a Hasmonean chronicle at all indicates that, as Joseph Sievers puts it, “female

members of the dynasty had an opportunity and a need to take their destiny and that of their family into their own hands, and a sizeable number did so with great vigor and considerable skill” (Sievers 1989, 145). In *Jewish Antiquities* 13, we meet Simon’s widow dying a martyr’s death in defense of her son and her dynasty (*Ant.* 13.230–235). We meet John Hyrcanus I’s widow who is appointed queen on her husband’s death, but is then starved to death by her son (*Ant.* 13.302). We encounter Judas Aristobulus I’s widow engineering the assassination of the king’s brother Antigonus (*Ant.* 13.308) and meddling with the succession (*Ant.* 13.320). And then, of course, we meet Queen (Shelamzion) Alexandra herself, who is appointed by her husband Alexander Jannaeus and who ruled independently for nine years (76–67 B.C.E.; *Ant.* 13.398–432). I thus suggested that in the Hasmonean dynasty, despite the way their chroniclers chose to portray them, women had real power, perhaps because the law of Hasmonean succession put the king’s widow first in line. Hyrcanus I’s widow was assassinated before taking power, and Aristobolus I’s widow stepped down, nominating her brother-in-law in her place. Alexander Jannaeus’s widow chose to assume power (Ilan 2006, 43–60).

The rule of Alexandra was, of course, different. Despite one important twentieth-century historian who chose to ignore her reign altogether in writing, “The twenty years after Jannaeus’ death were merely years of war between his sons Hyrcanus II, the High Priest, and Aristobulus II” (Tarn 1952, 236), most historians, including Josephus, found her years of reign important enough to merit a full report (for special studies devoted to her, see Baltrusch 2001; Lambers-Petry 2003; Rocca 2005; Atkinson 2005, 2012).

In fact, Josephus tells of her reign twice, once in *Jewish War* (1.107–119) and once in *Jewish Antiquities* (13.405–432), and the tone of the two reports is markedly different. While in *Jewish War* Josephus claims that:

Alexander bequeathed the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, being convinced that the Jews would bow to her authority as they would to no other, because by her utter lack of his brutality and by her opposition to his crimes she had won the affections of the populace. Nor was he mistaken in his expectations; for this frail woman firmly held the reins of government, thanks to her reputation for piety.

(*War* 1.107–108; trans. Thackeray, LCL)

He also notes “she proved, however, to be a wonderful administrator in large affairs ...” (*War* 1.112; trans. Thackeray, LCL). In *Jewish Antiquities*, he describes her thus:

She was a woman who showed none of the weakness of her sex; for being one of those inordinately desirous of power to rule, she showed by her deeds the ability to carry out her plans, and at the same time she exposed the folly of those men who continually fail to maintain sovereign power.

For she valued the present more than the future, and making everything secondary to absolute rule, she had, on account of this, no consideration for either decency or justice. At least matters turned out so unfortunately for her house that the sovereign power which it had acquired in the face of greatest dangers and difficulties was not long afterward taken from it because of her desire of things unbecoming a woman, and because she expressed the same opinion as did those who were hostile to her family, and also because she left the kingdom without anyone who had their interests at heart. And even after her death she caused the palace to be filled with misfortunes and disturbances which arose from the public measures taken during her lifetime.

(*Ant.* 13.430–432; trans. Marcus, LCL)

What can be the reason for this negative summation? Steve Mason, who devoted a lengthy chapter to the topic, began by stating: “She ... was portrayed positively in *War*, as a pious woman; it was only her gullibility that allowed the Pharisees to exploit her” (Mason 1991, 248) but concluded that “Queen Alexandra ... is now [in *Jewish Antiquities*] completely out of order and it is she who plunges the dynasty into irreversible straits. The reason is that she betrayed her house to its Pharisee opponents” (Mason 1991, 259). Thus, Mason explains the contradiction between the two reports as the doing of Josephus himself and in accordance with his developing negative attitude to the Pharisees, which becomes more pronounced in his later work.

In my study, I argued that Alexandra’s description in *Jewish War* is Josephus’s own, while this second description derives from Josephus’s source, Nicolaus of Damascus. I based my argument on the impersonal language used here:

At least matters turned out so unfortunately for *her* house that the sovereign power which *it* had acquired in the face of greatest dangers and difficulties was not long afterward taken from *it* ... because she left the kingdom without anyone who had their interests at heart. And even after her death she caused the palace to be filled with misfortunes and disturbances which arose from the public measures taken during her lifetime.

(*Ant.* 13.431–432; italics mine; trans. Marcus, LCL)

These words make the queen responsible for the civil war between her sons, and for the fall of the Hasmonean State to the Romans. Yet elsewhere, in very emotional, first-person language, Josephus blames others for these events:

For this misfortune which befell Jerusalem Hyrcanus and Aristobulus were responsible, because of their dissension. For *we* lost our freedom and became subject to the Romans, and the territory which *we* had gained by *our* arms and taken from the Syrians *we* were compelled to give back to

them ... and the royal power which had formerly been bestowed on those who were high priests by birth became the privilege of commoners.

(*Ant.* 14.78, italics mine; trans. Marcus, LCL)

Josephus himself had only positive things to say of the queen, as his description of her reign in *Jewish War* indicates and even as its description in *Jewish Antiquities* ends: “Nevertheless, in spite of reigning in this manner, she kept the nation in peace” (*Ant.* 13.432). As with his depiction of biblical women, most of Josephus’s really negative judgments of Alexandra are merely those he borrows from his sources, in this case Nicolaus of Damascus.

If this is true for Hasmonean women, then it is that much more so for Herodian ones, whom Nicolaus described from firsthand, personal acquaintance. The important women of this court—Mariamme the Hasmonean, Herod’s wife; Alexandra, her mother; Cyprus, Herod’s mother; Salome, his sister; Doris and Mariamme, daughter of Simon, his other wives; his sons’ wives Berenice and Glaphyra; and the nameless wife of Herod’s brother Pheroras—all receive a detailed treatment. They all get entangled and involved in Herod’s complex relationship with his Hasmonean wife, her grandfather, her mother, her brother, and her two sons, whose lives all end tragically. The way these deaths came about is again very differently described in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*. In *Jewish War*, Josephus lumps all Herod’s gruesome deeds against the Hasmoneans in one short chapter (*War* 1.431–444). The overt purpose of this chapter is, according to Josephus, to show how “in revenge for his public prosperity, fortune visited Herod with troubles at home” (*War* 1.431), but its covert purpose is to demonstrate what Josephus deeply believed, namely that Herod cold-bloodedly and systematically assassinated all his Hasmonean predecessors, women included. In *Jewish Antiquities*, the same events are described throughout Book 15, chronologically and in great depth and detail. Even though this description is just as gruesome, somehow, because it is so evenly spread, one loses sight of its accumulative effect. Instead, what stands out is the amount of feminine jealousy and intrigue involved in the development of these events. Mariamme’s mother is ambitious for her son. Herod’s mother and sister are jealous of his Hasmonean wife. Mariamme is full of hubris and displays a fair amount of arrogance toward her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. All this leads to the reader confusing the victim with the perpetrator, and places the women in a position to influence—through malicious intrigue—the outcome of political events. In my study of these events I argued that the differences between these two descriptions derive from the fact that in the 70s of the first century, when Josephus wrote *Jewish War*, he did not have at his disposal Nicolaus’s description of these events, which he only came by once he began his research for *Jewish Antiquities* (Ilan 1999, 107–110). This literary approach that places women as the negative motivator at the center of events is, according to my interpretation, due to Nicolaus of Damascus’s

contribution to the picture of women in Josephus.

I also argued that, in his description of Herodian women, Nicolaus nursed a personal grudge, particularly against Herod's sister, Salome, who had been his opponent in the struggle over Herod's succession. She supported Herod Antipas (*Ant.* 17.220; cf. *War* 2.14) and Nicolaus supported Archelaus (*War* 2.34–36; *Ant.* 17.240–247, 315–316). I even claimed that:

A final sober note should be made on Salome's political choice of Antipas as Herod's successor ... we cannot know why Archelaus was so unsuccessful as a ruler; but ... in the year 6 CE Augustus ... had him removed and exiled (*BJ* 2.111; *AJ* 17.344) ... Nicolaus had indeed defended the wrong candidate for Herod's succession. Antipas (on the other hand) ... ruled Galilee for 42 years, and survived not only Augustus but also his successor, Tiberius... Thus, Salome ... made a better political judgment. She recommended a person who truly had the administrative capability to rule.

(Ilan 1999, 125)

By making this comment, I wanted to differentiate between three levels in which we can judge women in Josephus: (1) the level on which they were judged in their day, based on the loves and hates in their surrounding environment and on preconceived notions of what women are, or what they should be (in this case, Nicolaus judging Salome as his political opponent); (2) the level of the reception history: Josephus as a vehicle of Nicolaus's judgment on women, displaying little personal involvement or a motivation to correct the picture he received from others; and (3) the level of the reader today, who should distinguish between rhetoric, stereotypes, and misogyny, on the one hand, and some basic historical facts, which s/he can then interpret, on the other.

One additional comment is important in this context. The fact that Josephus devotes so much space to Herodian women is no indication of how much more politically active and important they were than Hasmonean women. Quite the contrary, unlike Hasmonean women, who were all potential queens and one of them also a real queen, in Herod's court, women had little say and occupied no official position. The reason they are described so fully and in such detail in the writings of Josephus, is wholly indebted to another genre of historical writing, very different from the one Nicolaus found when he came to write his Hasmonean chronicle. In this genre women's involvement, much more imagined than real, is blown out of all proportion, and always for the worse.

Nicolaus was not alone in this style of writing in his day. The way he portrays the women relatives of Herodian royalty was taken over by the anonymous historian(s), who described the rule of Herod's grandson, King Agrippa and his womenfolk (his wife Cyprus and his sister Herodias), a source which

Josephus also used (see Schwartz 1990, 48). Here too, many of the actions taken by the male actors Josephus describes, particularly Agrippa, but also his uncle and brother-in-law Herod Antipas, are prompted by the words of their womenfolk, and these sometimes lead them to their downfall. Perhaps even the story of how Herodias of the New Testament manipulated the beheading of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:3–12; Mark 6:17–28) can be seen as belonging to such historiography. Yet it should be emphasized that Josephus himself, when he writes as a firsthand witness to events, never engages in this sort of rhetoric. In his *Jewish War* and in his *Life*, women never take center stage, and are only ever mentioned when they happen to be on the scene and their actions cannot be ignored. In this, his writing resembles much more that of 1 Maccabees than that of Nicolaus of Damascus.

12.4 Josephus as Eyewitness

Josephus's *Life* is an autobiography (see [Chapter 3](#) by Mason on *Life* in this volume). As such, we expect to learn from it much about Josephus's personal life, and in it, his relationship with the women of his life. In this we are disappointed. Although Josephus does say some words about his wives, mentioning three separate marriages, he does not even count all of them. We learn incidentally in *War* 5.419, a speech Josephus delivers to the besieged inhabitants of Jerusalem, that he had also left a wife behind, within the confines of the city. In any case, Josephus tells us in *Life* that he was given a captive as a wife by Vespasian but she left him (414–415), that after the war, he married an Alexandrian Jewess (415) but divorced her (426), and that finally he married a Cypriot Jewess, and they lived happily ever after (427). From this sort of information, Feldman deduced that “Josephus must have been difficult to live with” (Feldman 1986, 116). I suspect, however, that this is not the sort of conclusions that Josephus's sparse personal information allows us to deduce. These women serve as mere signposts in Josephus's life, and if we want to see how Josephus himself treated the subject of women in history, we should investigate other women he mentions in *Life* and in the latter books of *Jewish War*. The rest of this section provides a virtually complete list of such women.

In *Life* 186, Josephus mentions Justus of Tiberias's sister as being assassinated by Justus's political opponents. This is definitely a political event of some significance, but Josephus fails to tell us what this significance was, or what it was that the sister did which landed her in such a plight.

In *Jewish War* 3.344, Josephus relates how the location of the cave in which he was hiding in Jotapata was revealed to the Romans by a woman who had been with them and then (presumably left) and was captured. Although Josephus must have harbored much malice towards this woman, she too

receives no more than a brief mention.

In *Jewish War* 4.538, Josephus relates how the rebels under John of Gishala hijacked Simon Bar Giora's wife, thinking they were about to take the man himself prisoner. I find it highly significant that the rebels could have confused one for the other. Obviously she was his companion in war and they were to be found in similar locations. Josephus fails to comment on this.

In *Jewish War* 7.369, in the famous story of Masada, we hear of two women who, together with five children they obviously protected, managed to escape the suicide pact. One of these women, whom Josephus describes as exceptionally sagacious, must have been very important to him, since she would have been his source for the entire Masada episode; yet again he fails to say more about her.

Of special significance in this context is Queen Berenice, Agrippa I's daughter and Agrippa II's sister. This woman was so important politically that she is mentioned by at least three contemporary Roman historians (Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2.1; Suetonius, *Titus* 7.1; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 66.15.3–4). Her major importance derives from the fact that she became the emperor's son, Titus's mistress, and thus, at a time that the Jews were defeated and disinherited, came ironically close to becoming the First Lady of Rome once Titus became emperor. This, however, was not to be. These facts we know from elsewhere. Josephus breathes not a word about them. We do know, however, that he was personally acquainted with the woman, because he says as much in his *Life* 126–131. And he does mention Berenice as going to plead before the Roman procurator Florus on behalf of the people of Jerusalem (*War* 2.310–314), as supporting her brother's attempts to pacify the insurgents in the city (2.333; 402–405), and then as fleeing Jerusalem with him (2.407), but nothing more. Twenty years later, when he wrote *Jewish Antiquities* and when Titus was already dead, he did allow himself to denigrate the woman, relating her three unsuccessful marriages (*Ant.* 19.276–277, 20:145–146), and the rumor that she was intimate with her own brother (20.145), but scholars suspect that Josephus here is dependent on other sources, hardly voicing his own views (Schwartz 1982, 241–243).

I thus wish to surmise that as a historian, Josephus saw himself as responsible for relating the important events of war and not what he would have considered as “old maid's tales” and gossip, like some other historians. This, however, did not prevent him from quoting these other historians extensively.

12.5 Josephus as a Historian of Women

Seldom, and in by now celebrated cases, does Josephus voice his opinion on womenfolk in general (Feldman 1986, 115–120; Bailey 1987, 155–157;

Mayer-Schärtel 1995, 316–376). Yet when he does, his negative judgment is loud and clear. In *Against Apion*, in his description of Jewish law, we read: “A woman, it [our Law] says, is inferior to a man in all respects. So let her obey, not that she may be abused, but that she may be ruled; for God has given power to the man” (*Apion* 2:201; trans. Barclay, BJP).

In *Jewish Antiquities* 4.219, when describing certain other laws, Josephus states, quite of his own accord: “Let the testimony of women not be accepted because of the levity and boldness of their gender” (trans. Feldman, BJP). And Josephus’s Samson is said to exclaim: “neither is anything more deceitful than the woman ...” (*Ant.* 5.294; trans. Feldman, BJP). All these statements, which purport to report faithfully biblical accounts, are in fact Josephus’s own judgments. From them, we may conclude that, if Josephus, with relation to any event, states that this is women’s doing, or implies a large female presence, he is either pronouncing a negative judgment, or expressing surprise that something positive is possible, despite the many women involved. One example for this may suffice. In *Jewish Antiquities* 3.5, in order to demonstrate how weak and undisciplined the Israelites who left Egypt were, Josephus states that they were no army, but rather “a rabble of women and children” (trans. Thackeray, LCL). This judgment of the Israelites’ weakness is not supported by a biblical text. Yet the Bible, too, explicitly states that women and children were among those who left Egypt (see, e.g., Exod. 12:37, which mentions children, and 15:20, which mentions women dancing at the Red Sea after the drowning of the Egyptians). Thus, Josephus uses specific information his source provides about women, but pronounces his own judgment based on it.

Yet it is precisely statements about the deeds of women in general that can mark Josephus as a historian of women. Thus, when he states that the Essenes refrain from marrying because they believe that they thus “protect themselves from the wanton ways of women, having been persuaded that none of them preserves her faithfulness to one man” (*War* 2.121; trans. Mason, BJP), we cannot be certain that this judgment indeed comes from the sect, but no one would doubt that the Essenes were indeed celibate, foremost because this is confirmed by Philo’s description of this sect (*Hyp.* 11.14). Philo also proclaims the Essenes’ celibacy to be the result of a negative evaluation of women’s character, but the contents of this value judgment are different (“a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and an adept for beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued impostures,” trans. Colson, LCL).

In view of this, when Josephus states emphatically that “by these men, called Pharisees, the women [of Herod’s court] were ruled” (*Ant.* 17:41; trans. Marcus, LCL), this is intended as a compliment neither to the Pharisees, nor certainly to the women. Josephus rather states that they deserve one another. Yet, as I had stated previously, while Josephus’s judgment here is negative, he

is probably describing a well-known historical fact about the connection of women and Pharisaism (Ilan 1999, 15–17).

Similarly, we can assess Josephus's description of Simon Bar Giora's soldiers. When, in *Jewish War* 4.505, he describes Simon's army as "him and his following of women" (trans. Thackeray, LCL), it is most doubtful that he intends to praise this army. Yet since we already know from elsewhere (see above) that Simon's wife traveled with him, this statement can have in it more than a grain of truth about women revolutionaries in the warring faction who took part in the war against the Romans (Ilan 1999, 74–78). Thus, when Josephus, in sheer disbelief, relates how women assisted men in their fight against the Romans in the Galilean township of Japhia (*War* 3.303), he only confirms what Tacitus has to say about women and men fighting together against the Romans in the battle for Jerusalem (*Hist.* 5.13.3).

Similarly, Josephus tells us that the women of Damascus had, much more than their menfolk, all "been attracted to Judean worship" (*War* 2.560; trans. Mason, BJP). Whether in this statement a note of scorn is evident, or merely amazement, is hard to decide (see also Schwartz 2007). In any case, it is probably a truth or a rumor that was known to Josephus. That Josephus himself knew firsthand important Roman matrons who were sympathetic to Judaism and thus helpful to him (Poppaea, Nero's wife, *Life* 16; Domitia, Domitian's wife, *Life* 429) is doubted by no one (see Matthews 1999).

These last comments should alert us to how useful Josephus can be as a source for the involvement of women in the political history of the Jewish people. While attempts to use this historian as a source of social history are, in my opinion, doomed to fail (contra Mayer-Schärtel 1995), reading him for evidence about the things he tells us firsthand about women's involvement in political history can be most useful.

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FURTHER READING

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On Hasmonean and Herodian women

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Women in general

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Josephus on Women Converts to Judaism.” In *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, edited by Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog, 93–109. Leiden: Brill.

And for those who read German:

Mayer-Schärtel, Barbel. 1995. *Das Frauenbild des Josephus: Eine sozialgeschichtliche und kulturanthropologische Untersuchung*. Stuttgart. Kohlhammer.

CHAPTER 13

The Hasmoneans in Josephus

Erich S. Gruen

13.1 Introduction

Josephus opens his *Life* with the proud declaration that his maternal lineage connects him to royalty: the descendants of Hasamoneus for a very long period held both the high priesthood and the kingship of the nation (*Life* 2; cf. *War* 5.419; *Ant.* 16.187; Mason 2001, 6–7). A striking assertion. Some have doubted the legitimacy of Josephus's claim, suggesting that the boast was bogus (Cohen 1979, 108). Perhaps so, but no matter. Josephus put it forth, associated himself with the Hasmoneans more than once, and presented himself as beneficiary of their achievements and repute. Whatever the truth of the genealogy, the professed link is what counts. The historian's boast, one might expect, would color and shape his narrative of that family's history, deeds, and accomplishments. In his summary statement after recording the death of the last Hasmonean, Josephus pauses to affirm that that dynasty earned renown not only because of the splendor of its line and its exercise of the high priesthood but also because of the deeds it had performed in the interest of its people (*Ant.* 14.490). Does he, in fact, present a rosy portrait, an inflated account of the qualities of the Hasmonean house, the attainments of its leaders, and the legacies of its years in power? Matters are not so simple.

13.2 Hasmonean History

The Hasmonean years certainly elevated Jewish authority in Palestine to a high point. The nation acquired a conspicuous place on the stage of international relations in the eastern Mediterranean. For a century and a half the successive suzerainties of Ptolemies and Seleucids had kept Judea in subordinate but relatively stable status. A sharp change, however, and a milestone in Jewish experience occurred when Antiochus IV imposed his ferocious measures upon Judea, compelling Jews to abandon hallowed practices, enforcing new rites and sacrifices, brutally persecuting those who refused to comply, and, in effect, ordering the termination of the temple cult. These intolerable acts provoked the resistance that altered the course of Jewish history. Mattathias, identified by Josephus as a son of Hasamoneus, led the protest and incited rebellion, a cause taken up after his death by his five

sons headed by Judas Maccabeus. Stunning victories on the battlefield allowed Judas to retake Jerusalem, purify and reconsecrate the temple in 164 B.C.E., a feat still celebrated annually in the festival of Hanukkah. Those successes inaugurated the ascendancy of the Hasmoneans. And a treaty with Rome in 161 gave Judea a presence (however minor) in the diplomacy of the wider Mediterranean world. Judas's death in that year set in motion a Hasmonean succession to authority first by his brothers, Jonathan and Simon in turn, then by the next generation, John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, and his sons Aristobulus, and Alexander Janneus, followed by Janneus's widow Salome Alexandra, a sequence of vigorous rulers who dominated the scene down to 67 B.C.E. Internal strife thereafter weakened the dynasty, rendered it vulnerable, placed it once more under external authority, and led eventually to its demise. For almost a century, however, Hasmoneans held sway in Judea, during the course of which they instituted an autonomous state, expanded territory, brought cities and peoples under their dominion, conducted diplomacy with Hellenistic princes and pretenders, and enjoyed cordial relations with Rome (Schürer 1973, 164–232; Goldstein 1989, 298–349; Sievers 1990, 41–156). Looking back upon that era, Josephus had substantial reason for taking pride in the feats of his (real or putative) ancestors.

The Hasmoneans, however, also had much to answer for. The century in which they ruled the roost also witnessed Hasmonean aggression, wars, destruction, brutality, questionable if not unprincipled behavior by the high priests (who were all Hasmoneans from the time of Jonathan), family intrigue and murder, collaboration with Hellenistic powers for the purpose of personal aggrandizement, and fearful clashes within the Judean community. Did Josephus seek to soften the impact of such disturbing events and developments and whitewash the perpetrators of these foul deeds?

Two major issues have attracted the attention and exercised the ingenuity of modern scholars with regard to the Hasmonean period. The first concerns the dynasty's role in the tension between "Judaism" and "Hellenism" in Palestine (e.g., Hengel 1974 *passim*; Kasher 1990, 58–171; Rajak 1990, 261–280; Rappaport 1992, 1–13; Gruen 1998, 1–40). The second involves the motivation and ideology behind Hasmonean expansionism, imperialism, and forced assimilation of neighboring peoples (e.g., Schwartz 1991, 16–38; 1993, 9–25; Smith and Cohen 1996, 263–288; Weitzman 1999, 37–59; Pasto 2002, 166–201; Shatzman 2007, 237–270). Debates on these subjects continue to roil academic discussions. What is striking and rarely noticed, however, is that Josephus takes little or no interest in these matters. They may hold a conspicuous place in scholarly disputes, but Josephus is blissfully unconcerned. He concentrates upon a narrative of political and military events that largely eschews comment on broader implications or investigation of deeper issues. He does supply ample information to judge the character and qualities of the leaders. But the account follows no consistent line of laudation

or glorification. Josephus did not serve as partisan proponent of his professed ancestors.

13.3 Josephus and 1 Maccabees

In recounting the history of the Hasmoneans, Josephus had before him the First Book of Maccabees. That work, composed probably in the late second century B.C.E., traced the fortunes of the family from the outbreak of the rebellion under Mattathias in 167 through the death of Simon in 135. Josephus followed it closely for almost all of that period, employed it as his principal source, echoing its narrative and often its very language. Not that he was a slavish copier. Various divergences from the text occur, expansions, elaborations, or indeed omissions. Josephus did not rely exclusively on 1 Maccabees (Goldstein 1976, 558–574; Cohen 1979, 44–47; Gafni 1989, 116–131; Bar-Kochva 1989, 186–193; Feldman 1994, 41–43; Nodet 2005, 407–431). Just what other source or sources he might have used and the degree of his dependence on these putative works are matters of sheer speculation and can be safely avoided here. The historian was able to make his own changes and for his own purposes. He was no mindless reproducer of whatever texts he might have had in his possession. The survival of 1 Maccabees, allowing us to compare Josephus's presentation directly with that of his primary source, makes this quite clear. The two accounts are unmistakably parallel—which makes the deviations all the more conspicuous.

One passage deserves special notice. The author of 1 Maccabees holds the Hasmoneans in high esteem. The work as a whole serves almost as a paean to the family and an exhibit of their admirable qualities and accomplishments. Josephus, to a large degree, has similar sentiments, as one might expect from a descendant of that house. Perhaps the most overt statement along these lines in 1 Maccabees occurs in the author's contrast of victories by Judas, Jonathan, and Simon with the failures of their subordinate commanders, Josephus, son of Zacharias, and Azarias. The latter two had sought to emulate the successes of the Maccabees, marched in violation of orders against the town of Jamnia, and suffered ignominious defeat. The author opines that the reasons for their failure lay not only in disobedience of their orders but in the fact that they did not belong to that family of men to whom alone the salvation of Israel had been entrusted (1 Macc. 5.61–62). Here was the most forthright assertion that the Hasmoneans had divine sanction for the rescue of their people.

Josephus reproduces this text—with one striking alteration. He ascribes the disaster at Jamnia to the generals who failed to heed Judas's instructions to avoid battle until he arrived, adding even that Judas had expected calamity if there were any deviation from his orders. But Josephus pointedly omits any reference to the Hasmonean family as the designated standard-bearer for the

deliverance of the nation (*Ant.* 12.350–352). Given the close paraphrase in the rest of the passage, that can hardly be an accident. Josephus, despite his genealogical claim, rejected the idea that the Hasmoneans as a clan were marked out by God for the salvation of his people. The reason for this conscious and deliberate departure from his source has generated debate. Some explain it as Josephus's disenchantment with the later Hasmoneans by contrast to the generation of Judas (Goldstein 1976, 56, 74, 304; Gafni 1989, 119). Others see it as Josephus's emphasis upon the individual leader rather than the family (Feldman 1994, 54). Still others ascribe it simply to the historian's inconsistency (Cohen 1979, 46–47). A definitive solution eludes our grasp. But Josephus clearly eschewed the role of propagandist for the Hasmonean house. That point requires emphasis.

Availability of the account in 1 Maccabees allows for other comparisons that prompt consideration. The narratives are largely congruent, but the occasional omission, expansion, or alteration can shed some light on Josephus's disposition or rather dispositions toward the Hasmoneans.

13.4 Judas Maccabeus

The author of 1 Maccabees introduces Judas Maccabeus with a flourish. He breaks into verse, depicting Judas as an imposing warrior, a giant buckling on breastplate to enhance the glory of his people, protecting his camp with a sword, tracking down the enemy, and terrifying the wicked like a lion roaring over his prey. The images seem almost Homeric but the sentiments are solidly Judean, for the hero's triumphs bring joy to Jacob, pass through the cities of Judah, and deflect anger from Israel (1 Macc. 3.3–9). Josephus has none of this. The historian brings Judas onto stage with acclaim for his deeds, but in sober, prosaic fashion: the leader who would drive enemies out of the land, eliminate those who had violated ancestral practices, and cleanse the land of all impurity (*Ant.* 12.286). Josephus does not in any way diminish Judas, but he shifts from the realm of the superhuman to that of the championship of national traditions.

The differences are subtle but meaningful. Prior to the battle of Emmaus, a major contest with the forces of Antiochus IV under his general Lysias, Judas exhorted his troops with a brief but pointed statement, according to 1 Maccabees. He asserts that they must display courage against the foe who seeks to destroy them and their holy places; better to die fighting than to witness such destruction. “Whatever is willed in heaven, so shall it be done.” The words aim to bolster the spirits of the warriors. But the matter will be decided by God (1 Macc. 3.58–60). Josephus includes a supplication to God, but omits that concluding reference to determination by the divine. Judas's exhortation takes the form of reminding his men that they are fighting on

behalf of liberty, their native land, their laws, and their faith (*Ant.* 12. 304; cf. Gafni 1989, 119–126; Feldman 1994, 45–47, 63–65). In short, they will have the major hand in the outcome, not just a ruling from on high. For the historian, the Jews themselves must set the agenda for shaking off the oppressive yoke. As the battle commenced and the vast numbers of the enemy became clear, Judas needed another speech. The author of 1 Maccabees has Judas reassure his army by calling up the tale of rescue at the Red Sea when Hebrews were pursued by Pharaoh's hordes and urge a direct appeal to Heaven for a similar miracle based on the covenant with their fathers (1 Macc. 4.8–11). Josephus's version here again sets the emphasis differently, and significantly so. Judas does indeed remind the troops that God has in the past provided triumphs for his people against heavy odds—but that was because he admired their courage (*Ant.* 12.307). In the historian's view, the Jews themselves must demonstrate their worthiness.

The preliminaries to the next clash with Lysias's army at Beth Zur find a comparable contrast in the texts. The account in 1 Maccabees presents Judas as praying for succor to God, recalling the aid accorded to David against Goliath and the delivery of Israel from the Philistines, and asking that he fell their enemies by the swords of those who love him and who praise him in their hymns (1 Macc. 4.30–33). Prayer and faith alone earn divine favor. No biblical allusions, however, in Josephus. Judas duly offers up a prayer before battle but Josephus notably omits its contents. When hostilities begin, Lysias withdraws because he sees the fighting spirit of the Jews and recognizes that they prefer to die if they could not live as free men (*Ant.* 12.314–315). Once again, in Josephus's portrayal, it was the determination of the Jews to maintain their independence of foreign coercion, rather than appeal to divine mercy, which decided the outcome.

The narratives of the military clash at Elasa, the last battle of Judas's life, duly repeat the pattern discerned in 1 Maccabees and the changes entered by Josephus. Divine dictation prevails in the first, human action in the second. The contest seemed foredoomed, according to 1 Maccabees, Judas's troops decimated by defeat and desertion, and the remainder did not even wish to hear the commander's rallying cry. Judas proceeded anyway, asserting that nothing could induce him to flee and that "if our time has come," we shall perish bravely for the sake of our brothers (1 Macc. 9.8–10). The author makes his meaning clear enough: the Jews' fate is fixed from above; God will decide when their hour strikes. Josephus follows his source closely, but expands the passage with a slightly different nuance. Judas allows that the hour of his death may be near, but he is prepared to endure it nobly rather than rob his former deeds of their glory (*Ant.* 12.424–425). The accomplishments of the leader hold central place, and the importance of enshrining their memory constitute Judas's final words.

1 Maccabees leaves an admiring but quite brief obituary of the fallen

commander. He observes that Judas's brothers buried him among his forefathers and all Israel mourned, declaring "How our champion has fallen, the savior of Israel," an allusion to David's lament over the fallen Jonathan and Saul (1 Macc. 9. 19–21; cf. 2 Sam. 1.19, 27; Abel 1949, 164). Josephus leaves out the biblical reference, and embellishes the eulogy of Judas. The historian offers his own assessment: Judas had been a man of valor and a great warrior; he had carried out the prescriptions of his father Mattathias, and had both acted and suffered in the cause of liberty for his countrymen. Josephus adds that Judas's virtue was such that he left behind the most glorious memorial to his reputation, for he had freed his nation and delivered it from the slavery of the Macedonians (*Ant.* 12.433–434). He ascribes a still further honor to Judas, claiming that he had held the high priesthood for three years before his death. That he held this office finds no mention in 1 or 2 Maccabees and may be an inaccurate inference by the historian, although it shows his readiness to elevate Judas's stature (*Ant.* 12.434; cf. 12.414, 12.419; Sievers 1990, 75–77; VanderKam 2004, 241–242). Josephus, in any case, represents the Hasmonean leader as champion of his people and enforcer of their liberty—without mention of divine aid or biblical precedent.

The Josephan portrait of Judas Maccabeus is hardly an unbiased one. The historian delivered a glowing report, highly favorable to the Jewish leader who took charge of the resistance, fought with skill and valor, rallied forces with rousing speeches, and focused firmly on the liberation of his nation from the oppressor. But much of this was drawn directly from his principal source, 1 Maccabees; it was no crusade to advance the repute of the clan from which he descended. Josephus makes this clear in omitting the crucial phrase in 1 Maccabees that has the Hasmoneans marked out by divine fiat as the saviors of their nation. And he notably alters or reshapes the narrative of 1 Maccabees in several significant places to repress the dictates of God as decreeing events and shifts credit to the valor of Judas as emancipator of his people.

13.5 Jonathan

Jonathan succeeded his brother Judas as leader of the Jews. This was continuity rather than dynasty. The followers of Judas turned to him, in the account of 1 Maccabees, without great enthusiasm but simply as the logical person to take up leadership in the absence of anyone comparable to his brother (1 Macc. 9.30–31). That is hardly a ringing endorsement. Josephus interestingly dissents from that judgment. He notes that the surviving companions of Judas entreated Jonathan to take his place and that he was considered a man in no way inferior to his brother (*Ant.* 13.5–6). Having introduced Jonathan's entrance into leadership in this fashion, however, the succeeding narrative leaves him a curiously colorless figure. The bland

portrait in 1 Maccabees becomes no more vivid in Josephus. The historian deviates little from the account in his source and shows no interest in elevating the stature of Jonathan.

The new leader's initial deeds did not reflect great credit upon him. In order to avenge the kidnapping and death of his brother John, Jonathan ordered the ambush of an innocent wedding party, massacring bride, groom, friends, and other participants, carrying off all the finery and gifts, and turning a joyous occasion into a scene of lamentation (1 Macc. 9.35–42; *Ant.* 13.18–21). Not a good start.

The years of Jonathan's leadership, from 159 to 143 B.C.E., had the advantage (if it were an advantage) of bringing Judea onto the stage of Hellenistic power politics. Jonathan engaged heavily in diplomacy and negotiations with kings, princes, and pretenders from the Seleucid dynasty in Syria and the Ptolemaic monarchy in Egypt. As a consequence, he managed to lift his own profile on the international scene of the eastern Mediterranean, and gain titles, honors, and distinction that paved the way for future Hasmonean authority. His clever cultivation of contending claimants for power gave his own nation the space to maneuver into a position of some influence (cf. Gruen 1998, 12–18; Weitzman 2005, 34–54). Yet the portrait painted by 1 Maccabees to which Josephus closely conforms presents a largely passive figure, the recipient of awards and positions bestowed by others, the beneficiary of favors granted by greater powers, and a dependent upon their patronage.

A clash between claimants on the Seleucid throne afforded an opportunity. Demetrius I, soliciting the support of Jonathan and his followers, accorded him the status of ally and gave him the green light to gather and equip an army (1 Macc. 10.1–9; *Ant.* 13.37–40). The step had significant symbolic importance, an endorsement by the throne of Hasmonean recruitment of armed forces, and the formal status of ally. More was still to come.

Demetrius's rival, Alexander Balas, had a better offer: in return for Jonathan's support, he would appoint him as high priest, indeed provide the purple robes and gold crown for his formal investiture. Jonathan, unsurprisingly, took the better offer (1 Macc. 10.18–21; *Ant.* 13.43–46). The matter is of no small importance. For the first time, a Hasmonean actually occupied the office of high priest—and it came at the behest of a Hellenistic prince (Sievers 1990, 83–86, 102). When Demetrius, in turn, sought to sweeten his offer with a variety of concessions, both financial and territorial, Jonathan and his supporters expressed distrust and incredulity at the king's proposals and stuck with Alexander Balas. Such is the account in 1 Maccabees, a rare reference to an active decision by Jonathan—although he only decides between two Seleucid propositions (1 Macc. 10.46–47). Josephus does not even grant him that much initiative. He conveys only Demetrius's offer, without recording any decision on Jonathan's part (*Ant.* 13.58).

A subsequent episode reinforces the picture. The death of Demetrius I put Alexander Balas in sole control, and he entrenched his position by framing a marriage alliance with Ptolemy VI of Egypt. Balas summoned Jonathan to Ptolemais where he would be present at the wedding, would meet with both kings, provide them and their entourage with handsome gifts, and gain still further distinctions at their hands. The Seleucid monarch enrolled Jonathan among his “first friends,” ordered a new and splendid purple robe for him, and had him sit on a dais with the king (1 Macc. 10.59–66; *Ant.* 13.83–85). This conspicuous public display of royal favor markedly enhanced Jonathan’s image and authority—but it also declared his dependency on the endorsement of Hellenistic kings. Josephus does not in any significant way alter the presentation of 1 Maccabees. The initiative for this episode came from Alexander Balas. Jonathan here, as before, is merely the passive recipient of these honors. He had, in effect, been co-opted as a Seleucid official.

The pattern continues. Balas promoted Jonathan to the honorific rank of “kinsman” after he gained some victories over the king’s foes (1 Macc. 10.88–89; *Ant.* 13.102). And Ptolemy of Egypt met with him at Joppa in full regalia with proper formalities, according to 1 Maccabees, that seemed to put the Hasmonean on a level with the Hellenistic ruler (1 Macc. 11.6–7). Josephus diverges very slightly but interestingly here. He makes it clear that the gifts and honors were bestowed upon Jonathan by the king (*Ant.* 13.105). Lest there be any illusions about equality, Josephus properly portrays the relationship as subordination.

The murder of Balas brought to the throne Demetrius II who made sure to put Jonathan in his proper place. He brusquely ordered the Hasmonean to abandon his siege of the Akra, the Macedonian citadel in Jerusalem, and Jonathan meekly complied. The new king could now revive the distinctions awarded by his predecessors, confirm him as high priest, and enroll him among the royal “first friends.” That public ceremony in Ptolemais reinforced Jonathan’s standing at home, and Demetrius followed with promised benefits in the form of land and revenues. But all of this simply announced in effect that Jonathan was little more than the king’s surrogate in Judea (1 Macc. 11.20–37; *Ant.* 13.120–128). Josephus’s account makes no secret of it.

Nor did Demetrius make good on all his promises. He was soon embroiled in new dynastic strife, a contest with the rebel Tryphon, a supporter of his rival Antiochus VI. Jewish forces rallied to Demetrius’s support, but, once he got the upper hand, he reneged on previous offers and broke relations with Jonathan. Josephus’s narrative stresses the treachery of Demetrius, but does not disguise the implication that Jonathan was duped (*Ant.* 13.136–143; cf. 1 Macc. 11.44–53). The triumph of Antiochus’s forces over Demetrius brought about yet another repetition of the familiar pattern. Young Antiochus, who could use Jonathan’s military support, reasserted the Seleucid endorsement of his high priesthood, sent him gifts, confirmed his right to territories he had

been awarded, and made him one of the king's "friends" (1 Macc. 11.57–58; *Ant.* 13.145–147). Each of these formalities and gestures in turn enhanced the position of the Hasmonean—but simultaneously and unmistakably reasserted the right of the crown to confer the distinctions. The texts leave little doubt on that score. Jonathan is beneficiary rather than benefactor, recipient rather than initiator.

Jonathan's demise too was inglorious, indeed ignominious. In yet another of the shifting contests for Seleucid dynastic supremacy, the rebel Tryphon broke with Antiochus and seized the throne himself. Jonathan, loyal to the king, gathered a large force and confronted the usurper. But Tryphon shrewdly sweet-talked the Hasmonean with various promises, induced him to dismiss his army and enter the gates of Ptolemais—and swiftly put him in custody (1 Macc. 12.39–48; *Ant.* 13.187–193). Dismay and lamentation followed, and word of Jonathan's death only emboldened the enemies of the Jews to renew hostilities with greater vigor (1 Macc. 12.52–53; *Ant.* 13.194–196). Josephus does make a weak attempt to soften this dismal tale with a tribute to Jonathan at the close. He maintains that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell into fear that, having lost the courage and foresight of Jonathan, they would become prey to their enemies who had been constrained only by those qualities of the leader (*Ant.* 13.195). The historian's narrative of Jonathan's high priesthood hardly prepares his readers for that verdict. Courage there may have been (though Josephus nowhere makes a point of it), but Jonathan had twice been deluded by Seleucid rulers, the second time with fatal consequences. Far from making him a heroic figure, Josephus presents an opportunist, cashing in when he could on the schemes of greater powers, a dependent of Seleucid and Ptolemaic rulers, largely compliant and acquiescent, and led finally into a lethal trap. Josephus's portrayal of Jonathan's years is far from a celebration of Hasmonean prowess.

13.6 Simon

If ever there was a Hasmonean hero, it surely was Simon, the last surviving son of Mattathias and head of the house after the death of Jonathan in 143. The author of 1 Maccabees indeed praises him to the skies, as none other. In his exposition, Simon proclaimed his readiness to take on leadership and to sacrifice his life on behalf of his nation and the temple, whereupon the people shouted their insistence that he take command of their fortunes (1 Macc. 13.2–9). It was Simon, so 1 Maccabees asserts, who, in negotiations with Demetrius II, gained full-scale independence from the yoke of the gentiles, remission of all taxes, elevation as high priest by the will of the people, and inauguration of a new era to be dated by the years of his own leadership (1 Macc. 13.33–42). Simon proceeded to recapture the Akra in Jerusalem, cleanse it of pollution,

and enter the citadel amidst joyous celebration, hymns of praise, and lavish acclaim, marking, so the author says, the expulsion of the great enemy from Israel (1 Macc. 13.49–52). The paean by 1 Maccabees becomes still more elaborate. The text turns into a hymn that credits Simon with bringing peace and prosperity to Judea, securing all its holdings, and allowing its inhabitants to farm their lands without fear, live in content and safety, and rejoice in a time when hostile monarchs had been crushed and all their foes had disappeared (1 Macc. 14.4–13; Abel 1949, 252). The idyllic portrait leaves a memorable impression. 1 Maccabees further records an inscription engraved on bronze and set up on Mount Zion by a grateful populace. It paid homage to Simon's success in thwarting the enemies of the nation, extending the boundaries of the land, regaining the citadel, obtaining acknowledgment as leader from both Demetrius and the Romans, and gaining the unalloyed devotion of his countrymen who invested in him full authority in all matters, military, political, and religious (1 Macc. 14.25–49; Abel 1949, 254–262; Goldstein 1976, 500–509; Sievers 1990 119–127; Krentz 2001, 146–153; van Henten 2001, 116–145).

All this seems to have been too much for Josephus. He duly stayed with the text of 1 Maccabees for the early part of Simon's high priesthood, then abandoned it thereafter. Even when his account still paralleled that of his model, Josephus considerably softened it. He omits 1 Maccabees' lofty statement that Simon had lifted the Gentile yoke from Israel and reproduces only a brief and prosaic echo of it (*Ant.* 13.215–217; cf. 1 Macc. 13.33–42). At this point, the historian leaves his source behind and turns elsewhere for his material. Just where he found it cannot be fully determined. In subsequent parts of his narrative he cites both Nicholas of Damascus and Strabo at various points. How closely he followed them and whom else he might have used remain matters of unpromising speculation. Josephus, in any case, chose to convey the account that we have, and that must serve as the basis for interpreting his own assessment of the Hasmoneans. It is tempting to suppose that he dropped 1 Maccabees when its laudations of the Hasmoneans became too excessive for his taste. But a mundane reason seems more likely: perhaps the text that Josephus possessed simply ran out at this point. Be that as it may, the historian plainly provides a notably less adulatory chronicle of Simon's years. Not that Josephus has anything negative to say. In his very brief summary in *Jewish War*, he characterizes Simon as having conducted his public affairs "nobly" and having gained a military victory with courage and energy even in his advanced years, a point he repeats in his *Jewish Antiquities* (*War* 1.50–53; *Ant.* 13.226–227). But he fails to register (if he knew of it) the inscription that expressed public gratitude at length for Simon's deeds. And he has nothing comparable to 1 Maccabees' impressive hymn-like paean to the utopian peace and prosperity enjoyed as consequence of Simon's achievements. The author of 1 Maccabees concludes his work with the death of Simon, a treacherous slaying engineered by his son-in-law Ptolemeus,

which he characterizes solemnly as a return of evil for good (1 Macc. 16.17). Josephus does no more than record the death (*Ant.* 13.228).

13.7 John Hyrcanus

The picture gets progressively darker with the later Hasmoneans. John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, ushered in the second generation of the dynasty when he inherited his father's high priesthood in 135. Josephus's overall assessment of Hyrcanus's reign is a decidedly favorable one. In his concluding remarks on Hyrcanus's death, the historian maintains that he had governed the realm in excellent fashion for thirty-one years, a man blessed with good fortune throughout, who alone combined the three highest distinctions: rule over his people, the high priesthood, and the power of prophecy (*War* 1.68–69; *Ant.* 13.299–300). Josephus thus finished with a flourish. But the narrative of Hyrcanus's years suggests something less than an altogether rosy era.

John Hyrcanus's initial acts upon ascending to power did not augur well. He marched against Ptolemeus, the slayer of his father and captor of his mother and brothers. But the siege of his stronghold got bogged down when Ptolemeus displayed the family of Hyrcanus on his battlements, tortured them, and threatened to hurl them down unless the siege was lifted. As Josephus tells the story, the high priest's mother exhibited great courage, exhorting her son to ignore her torment and press the siege. Hyrcanus wavered back and forth, swayed more by emotion than decisiveness, the siege eventually given up because of the onset of the sabbatical year, but Ptolemeus executed the family members anyway (*War* 1.57–19; *Ant.* 13.230–235). Hyrcanus's mother demonstrated admirable conviction in the tale. Her son did not come off so well. Like his predecessors, Hyrcanus gained ground for his nation by coming to terms with and cultivating alliances with Seleucid kings. On one occasion he persuaded Antiochus VII to lift his siege of Jerusalem by crossing his palm with three hundred talents of silver. The Hasmonean, according to Josephus's *Jewish War*, produced the money by opening the hallowed tomb of David (*War* 1.61). Josephus changed his mind later when writing the *Jewish Antiquities*, and separated the two matters. But he was consistent in affirming that much of the money from David's treasury was used to hire mercenary troops—the first Jew ever to resort to such a practice (*Ant.* 13.249). Josephus clearly did not applaud that move. Nor does he conceal the aggressiveness of Hyrcanus's aggrandizement (Fuks 1990, 167–169; Kasher 1990, 116–131). The siege of Samaria involved the starvation of its inhabitants, the reduction of survivors to slavery, the razing of the city, and even the undermining of its foundations to assure its being swept away by rain storms (*War* 1.64–65; *Ant.* 13.275–281). The relentless expansionism included the capture of Idumean

cities and the order that all male residents would have to undergo circumcision if they wished to remain (*Ant.* 13.257–258). And Hyrcanus had his share of internal problems as well. His very successes against foes outside Judea stirred resentment, sparked particularly by the Pharisees, some of whom spread ugly rumors, creating a situation in which Hyrcanus broke with the sect and moved into the camp of the Sadducees. Josephus's reconstruction indicates that this shift cost Hyrcanus support among the populace and even provoked the hatred of the majority against him (*Ant.* 13.28–296; Schwartz 1992, 44–56; Baumgarten 1997, 11–23). All this severely compromises Josephus's concluding statement that Hyrcanus conducted his government in the finest manner for thirty-one years. But the historian was content to let the narrative stand.

13.8 Aristobulus

The reign of Aristobulus, Hyrcanus's son, was brief and uneventful. Josephus again gives it a favorable slant with his summary: Aristobulus extended the boundaries of the realm by subduing the Itureans and, like his father and the Idumeans, compelling them to undergo circumcision if they wished to remain in their land. Josephus juxtaposes this, as did his source Strabo, with the somewhat incongruous judgment that Aristobulus was a reasonable man, even remarkably modest (*Ant.* 13.318–319). That assessment fits ill with the rest of the reign as Josephus himself transmits it. Short as his time was, Aristobulus managed to set a diadem on his head, transforming his rule into a monarchy, the first time, says Josephus, since the return from the Exile half a millennium earlier, he threw his brothers into chains, imprisoned his mother, exhibited cruelty, in Josephus's words, by having her die of starvation in prison, and he was conned into executing the one brother whom he actually loved (*War* 1.70–77; *Ant.* 13.301–313). That is far from an admiring portrait. Aristobulus ended his life in deep remorse for the slaying of his brother (*War* 1.81–84; *Ant.* 13.314–318). That may have prompted the approbatory assessment at the end, ascribed to Strabo who took it from Timagenes. But it is altogether at odds with and heavily outweighed by the events of the reign and the character of the man, as Josephus himself presents them. And he does not bother to issue a corrective.

13.9 Alexander Janneus

That Josephus holds no brief for the Hasmoneans generally becomes ever clearer. His depiction of Alexander Janneus, brother and successor of Aristobulus, is almost unrelievedly dark. Janneus opened his reign in

inauspicious fashion by murdering one of his brothers (*War* 1.85; *Ant.* 13.323). Matters then proceeded to get worse. Josephus describes Janneus's subjugation of Gaza, Raphia, and Anthedon as "enslavement" (*War* 1.87–88; Kasher 1990, 145–149). The external victories did not enhance his popularity at home, indeed prompted animosity and sedition. The massacre of six thousand Jews opposed to him escalated hostilities, and, when he tasted defeat at the hands of Arab forces, the hostilities issued in outright rebellion. The ensuing civil war cost the lives of fifty thousand Jews in a period of six years. Even his victories exhausted the realm and intensified hatred. And, when he asked what he might do to mollify his countrymen, the answer came back: "Die!" (*War* 1.90–92; *Ant.* 13. 375–376). Josephus pulls no punches here. He labels Janneus's slaughter of fellow Jews, the crucifixion of captives, and butchering of their wives and children, while he lolled about with his concubines, as sheer cruelty, savagery, outside the bounds of humanity, and in the realm of impiety (*War* 1.97; *Ant.* 13.380, 383; Fuks 1990, 169–171). The reign had its share of military victories and successful expansionism, but it reflected no glory upon the image of the Hasmonean house. This time Josephus could not produce even the semblance of a final eulogy. The best he could muster was that Janneus's triumphs in the last years brought him acclaim but that the campaigns themselves were ill-timed, went beyond his failing strengths, and contributed to a fatal illness aggravated by alcohol (*War* 1.105–106; *Ant.* 13.398). Not a pretty picture.

13.10 Salome Alexandra

Hasmonean fortunes grew grimmer. And Josephus kept his focus on their foibles. Janneus's will had designated his widow Salome Alexandra as his successor, despite the existence of two grown sons—or indeed because of it (on women in Josephus, see [Chapter 12](#) by Ilan in this volume). He showed sufficient foresight to know that the best chance for stability in the realm was to entrust leadership to one who enjoyed the favor of the Pharisees as Alexandra did, but as he had conspicuously not done. Janneus's deathbed plea to his wife to give some authority to the Pharisees was aimed primarily, in Josephus's jaundiced interpretation, to assure that he would receive a splendid funeral unmarred by Pharisaic vandalism (*Ant.* 13.404–406; cf. *War* 1.107–108). The advice, whatever its motive, proved all too successful. In Josephus's presentation Alexandra deferred excessively to the Pharisees who took advantage of the situation as the power behind the throne. The historian has the compliant ruler grant them every concession, indulging them even in ruthless retaliation against foes who had backed Janneus and thus intensifying the internal divisions among her subjects (*War* 1.110–113; *Ant.* 408–411). The appointment of one of her two sons, the docile Hyrcanus, as high priest,

in preference to the more headstrong and unpredictable Aristobulus, did not help matters. Aristobulus did his best to undermine his mother's authority, denouncing her capitulation to the Pharisees, and challenging the position of his brother Hyrcanus (*War* 1.114; *Ant.* 13.416–417). The turmoil within somehow did not prevent Alexandra from conducting foreign policy with some modicum of success, at least preventing Tigranes of Armenia from overrunning her country (*War* 1.112, 115–116; *Ant.* 13.419–421). But familial conflicts tore the nation apart. Alexandra's illness emboldened Aristobulus to aim for the throne, his mother sided with Hyrcanus, and the ensuing mobilization of Aristobulus reduced the queen to despair and incapacity, her death following shortly thereafter (*War* 1.117–119; *Ant.* 422–430).

Josephus struggles to render a balanced judgment. He praises Alexandra for increasing the army and pursuing a vigorous foreign policy, and he reckons her as one beloved of the people. He even claims that she belied the weaknesses of her gender, and that her accomplishments put many men in the shade (*War* 1.112; *Ant.* 13.407, 430). But the historian has no illusions about the quality of the reign, or indeed of the person. In addition to his exposition of the tensions and conflicts for which Alexandra was either responsible or could not control, he concludes on a decidedly negative note: she held the present as more important than the future, considered everything secondary to the exercise of supreme power, had no regard for what was good or just, and harbored ambitions unbecoming a woman (*Ant.* 13.430–431). The assessment is curiously inconsistent with comments made elsewhere in the narrative regarding Alexandra's weakness, susceptibility to bad advice, and subordination to the Pharisees. It was not the first time that Josephus had provided a concluding evaluation that sat ill with the rest of his account. And his final sentence, that Alexandra had preserved peace for her nation, hovers between paradox and absurdity. But the dismal forecast is unmistakable. Josephus affirms that the actions taken in her lifetime brought about the misfortunes and upheaval that would plague the kingdom after her death (*Ant.* 13.431–432).

No need to proceed further in this increasingly unhappy story. The internecine warfare between Alexandra's sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, as is notorious, not only split the Hasmonean house, but came at the most inconvenient of times. The Roman army under Pompey the Great and his lieutenants had arrived in 65 to convert Syria into a Roman province and to settle affairs in the region generally. In the course of it, the Roman general intervened forcefully in the Hasmonean struggle, invested the city with a bloody siege, and even entered the Holy of Holies in 63. It was a milestone in Jewish history. Although he allowed Hyrcanus to retain office as high priest (while stripping him of his royal title), Pompey, in effect, put an end to Jewish autonomy and the power of the Hasmoneans (*Ant.* 14.77–79; Schürer 1973, 233–242; Goldstein 1989, 346–351).

13.11 Conclusion

The Hasmoneans in Josephus are there, warts and all, indeed more blemishes than bloom. The historian, it seems, had some difficulty making up his mind about them. He prized the achievements of Judas Maccabeus, but held back from the notion of his source that Judas fulfilled divine dictates and headed a clan fated to bring salvation to Israel. Josephus preferred the heroic liberator to the man of God.

The enthusiasm for Judas did not carry over to his successors. Jonathan emerges as an uninspiring figure, scrambling to take advantage of quarrels among Hellenistic princes and usurpers, collecting titles and honors, but increasingly reliant upon and manipulated by external powers. Josephus gives a nod to Jonathan's courage and foresight at the close, but his own narrative points in different directions. The adulatory portrait of Simon that Josephus found in his source became rather more muted in his hands. He omits the most eulogistic parts of the tradition and leaves Simon as a worthy but hardly transcendent leader. Josephus does not present even the first generation of Hasmoneans as an exemplary house of heroes.

Matters went downhill from there. Josephus gives John Hyrcanus credit in general for running his realm admirably for three decades. But the particulars he provides undermine that verdict again and again. Hyrcanus exhibited both vacillation and ruthlessness, alienating the Pharisees and prompting dissent among the multitude. Territorial expansion was matched by deterioration of character. Aristobulus's short period of power earned some accolades from Josephus but was also marred by political ambitions and personal failings that the historian frowned upon. The negative dominates in the portrait of Alexander Jannaeus. Vigorous expansionism may have brought some glory but it was deeply scarred by cruelty, brutality, fierce hatred, and crippling civil strife. For Salome Alexandra, Josephus couples accolades with acrimony, offering plaudits for foreign policy and decidedly mixed messages on her character and values. And he holds her responsible for the falling fortunes that followed.

Josephus eschews a teleological chronicle from triumph to tragedy, with a progressive path to decadence. He can temper the received traditions about Judas and Simon, but he can find some reasons to appreciate even the dismal reigns of Hyrcanus and Alexandra. He provided no neat picture, for there was none to be had.

The Hasmoneans were a flawed family. Important achievements stood to their credit in terms of liberating their people from a cruel oppressor and lifting their nation onto the broader stage of the Hellenistic world. But this came at the cost of compromising and collaborating with greater powers, expansionist

policies that not only alienated non-Jews in Palestine but provoked internal dissent and dynastic discord. Josephus conducted no campaign to amplify the virtues or camouflage the defects. His chronicle of the Hasmoneans as a whole contains inconsistencies and puzzles, admiring comments juxtaposed to disheartening narratives. The paradoxes in his presentation may be the best testimony to the discordant saga of the clan.

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CHAPTER 14

Herod the Great in Josephus

Jan Willem van Henten

14.1 Introducing the Problem

Herod the Great is probably the best-known Jewish king among non-Jews. His fame is mostly negative: he is often perceived as a monstrous ruler and is even called the worst tyrant ever (Photius, *Bibl. codex* 238; cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2). Herod is famous for murdering his beautiful wife Mariamme I, her mother Alexandra, her brother Jonathan-Aristobulus III, three of his sons, Mariamme's grandfather, the former High Priest Hyrcanus II, as well as numerous subjects. The king's reputation was damaged once and for all by the story of the birth of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew presents Herod as the counterpart of the Messiah just born, who did not flinch from murdering all the children in and around Bethlehem of two years old or under in order to prevent the birth of the new king (Matt. 2:16). This profoundly negative reception of Herod the Great builds on Josephus's extensive reports about the king. Josephus devotes about half of the first book of his *Jewish War* to the rule of Herod. An even more elaborate description of Herod's rule is found in Books 15–17 of *Jewish Antiquities*. Herod's portraits in both of Josephus's works differ significantly, and the overall picture is clearly more negative in *Jewish Antiquities*, in which Herod turns out to be a tyrant at the end of his rule. These particulars call for a comparative analysis of the Herod reports in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, focusing on the correspondences and the differences between both narratives. Before taking in hand such an analysis of Josephus's passages, we need to deal briefly with the basics of Herod's rule as they are taken for granted by most scholars.

Herod was appointed King of Judea, Galilee, and Perea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C.E. at the instigation of Mark Antony (Josephus, *War* 1.281–285; *Ant.* 14.379–389; Richardson 1996, 113–145). Before that, he had made a profound impression as governor of Galilee, where he had put down a revolt of Hezekiah and his fellow brigands. The Romans appointed him twice as governor of Coele-Syria (“Hollow-Syria”). Although we will never know the precise motives of the Romans for preferring Herod to a Hasmonean ruler, it is plausible that under the current circumstances Herod was considered to be the most promising candidate to act as a king friendly to the Romans and to guarantee peace and order on the fringe of the Roman territories (on the Hasmoneans in Josephus, see [Chapter 13](#) by Gruen in this volume). It took

Herod several years to capture his territory with the support of the Romans, but from 37 (or 36) B.C.E. he actually ruled Judea and additional areas for more than thirty years. His death is usually dated to 4 B.C.E., although several scholars argue for a later date.

Herod came from an elite Idumean family (Kokkinos 1998); his father Antipater was the help and stay of the Hasmonean ruler Hyrcanus II, who already had earned a very good reputation among the Romans because of the repeated military support he provided. The Idumeans had converted to Judaism at the end of the second century B.C.E., which implies that Herod was a Jew, although some of his opponents disagreed with that (Antigonus II calls Herod a “half-Jew” according to Josephus, *Ant.* 14.403–404). Herod probably had ten wives, five daughters, and seven sons, three of whom became ruler of a part of the kingdom after Herod’s death (*War* 1.561–563; *Ant.* 17.19–21; Josephus explicitly mentions nine wives).

Herod was an energetic builder, as the stunning archaeological remains that are still visible in the Holy Land amply demonstrate (Netzer 2006). He built several fortresses and palaces, and constructed a new city with a magnificent harbor called Caesarea (at the location of Straton’s Tower, not far from present-day Hadera). His most prominent building project concerns the enlargement and renovation of the Jerusalem temple (see [Chapter 15](#) by Kaden in this volume). Despite these impressive building activities and the fact that Herod was rewarded several times by the Romans for a successful administration that lasted for decades, scholars often assess Herod’s rule negatively. They highlight the conflicts in Herod’s family and his murder of several close relatives, and point to his harsh rule because of severe taxes and the brutal treatment of his subjects. Some emphasize that Herod consistently violated Jewish practices and tried to impose Greek and Roman customs upon the Jews, or even argue that Herod suffered from a paranoid personality disorder and should be compared to dictators like Hitler and Stalin (Fenn 1992; Kasher 2007). Interestingly, such judgments are not that far away from Josephus’s depiction of Herod, particularly in the version found in *Jewish Antiquities*. I cannot further pursue the historical assessment of Herod’s rule here because that is a task far too complicated for this short contribution. In this chapter I will concentrate on the most important issues concerning Josephus’s presentation of Herod in both of his works, focusing first on his deeds and then on his character.

14.2 Herod and the Romans

Historians writing about an important person used to focus on this individual’s ideas and character first and then move on to his deeds, which presupposes that one could understand the deeds if one had a grip of the

vision of the person involved. As a matter of fact, the title of Abraham Schalit's important monograph on Herod still reflects this approach (Schalit 2001). Josephus also distinguishes between Herod's deeds and his character, but his point of view is different. He focuses first on the deeds: the main parts of the Herod narratives in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* offer a report of the king's deeds more or less in a chronological order. However, Josephus does not hesitate from interspersing his narrative with comments about Herod's deeds, and several of these comments focus on the king's character. I will start here with the deeds and devote the last section to Herod's character.

The main point in both *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* is that the verdict concerning Herod's deeds is mixed: Herod was successful in his external affairs, i.e., his military operations, his relationship with Rome, and his building activities within and outside the Judean heartland; but the king failed in his internal affairs, i.e., his policy towards his subjects, his response to Jewish opposition, and his failure to remain in control over his family. This leading theme is articulated in both writings in different ways.

Herod's official status was *rex sociusque et amicus* ("king, ally, and friend"). As a client king of the Romans, Herod's power was largely based on his patrons' support, which had to be secured by a successful rule, generous gifts, and military support to the Romans when needed. The kingdoms of friendly kings also functioned as buffers against external enemies and as a protection against pirates and bandits (cf. *War* 1.204–205, 389–390; *Ant.* 14.159–160; 15.344–348; Braund 1984). Several inscriptions, from the Diaspora as well as the Land of Israel, refer to Herod as a benefactor and friend (Greek: *philos*) of the Romans or the emperor. This matches an important point in Josephus's reports: Herod was successful as king because he had a good and mutually beneficial relationship with his Roman patrons: first, with Mark Antony, who settled Roman affairs in the East, and then, after the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., with Octavian, later named Augustus. Josephus indicates in both *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* that Herod was a "friend" of his first patron Mark Antony (e.g., *War* 1.386, 390; *Ant.* 15.131, 162, 183, 189, 195, 409), and afterwards of Augustus (e.g., *War* 1.394; *Ant.* 15.193, 195, 199). During Augustus's reign a third Roman high official, Marcus Agrippa, acted as go-between for Herod and the emperor. *Jewish War* 1.400 suggests that Herod had a close relationship with Agrippa as well as with Augustus himself: "But what was greater than all this in Herod's eyes was that next after Agrippa, he enjoyed Caesar's special favor (*ephileito*), and next after Caesar, he enjoyed Agrippa's [special favor]" (parallel to *Ant.* 15.361). Agrippa was very close to Augustus; he married the emperor's daughter Julia and went to the East as Augustus's deputy in 23 B.C.E. Whether Herod actually was a close friend of Augustus and Agrippa is a matter of debate. It is less plausible for Augustus—who met Herod only a few times—than for Agrippa, who is described as Herod's "friend and companion" in *Jewish Antiquities* 15.350

(see also *Ant.* 15.318 and 16.12–15; Richardson 1996, 226–234).

The message about Herod as a successful client king of the Romans is basically the same in both narratives, but if one moves on to a synoptic close reading of the relevant passages, differences in details become apparent (Landau 2006). For instance, the narrative about Herod's Roman appointment as king in *Jewish War* mentions Herod's bravery (*aretê*) and energy (*to drastêrion*) as important motives for Antony and Octavian/Augustus to put their bets on Herod as king (1.282–283; cf. 1.204, 322). *Jewish Antiquities* refers in this connection to Herod's loyalty to the Romans but does not mention Herod's bravery and energy. Instead, Josephus states that Antony opted for Herod because of the sum of money promised by Herod if he became king, and, as main reason, Antony's hatred of Antigonus, who was an enemy of state (14.382–384). Thus, the basic facts and the outcome of Herod's visit to Rome are the same in both narratives, but the changes in *Jewish Antiquities* concerning the motives for Herod's appointment imply that the king appears in a clearly less favorable light.

14.3 Successful Military Commander

Herod's capabilities as a military commander contributed significantly to a positive image (Shatzman 1991). Josephus unambiguously characterizes Herod in *Jewish War* as an irresistible warrior (*polemistês anupostatos*) who was seldom defeated (1.429–430). The basics in both reports are once again more or less the same. Already in his early career Herod distinguished himself by successfully performing military operations, which attracted the notice of the Romans. Herod dealt with brigands, offered military support to his Roman patrons, and fought several battles against the Nabateans, which were successful in the end. After his appointment as king, he had to secure his territory step by step by fighting under very difficult circumstances (*War* 1.286–357; *Ant.* 14.390–491), in part because the Parthians had invaded Syria at that time and taken the side of Herod's opponent Antigonus. More than three years after his appointment, after a long siege, he finally captured Jerusalem with the help of the Romans. The overall success of these military operations is already impressive, but Josephus's description implies that Herod was frequently personally involved in the actions of combat, which suggests that he really was an outstanding military leader. Herod mastered various kinds of combat, had fast and good judgment as a commander, took care of the needs of his soldiers, and took the lead if necessary.

One of the passages that reflect the Romans' admiration for Herod's military capabilities concerns the king's assistance to Antony when he was besieging Samosata (currently in Southeast Turkey). Herod interrupted his own campaign and decided to support Antony instead. Josephus describes this

support and Antony's response to it in highly positive terms; he even indicates that Herod's contribution tipped the balance:

Having heard that he [i.e., Antony], was waging war with a large army against Samosata, a strong city near the Euphrates, he [i.e., Herod] hastened more quickly, seeing this as a favorable moment both to demonstrate his courage and to ingratiate himself further with Antony. Indeed, with his arrival the siege was brought to an end. When [Herod] had killed many of the barbarians and collected a considerable booty, Antony, who had admired his valor for a long time, now held him in even higher regard and increased considerably his honors and his hopes of sovereignty.

(*War* 1.321–322; cf. *Ant.* 14.439–444)

A long section in *Jewish Antiquities* (15.108–160) concerns a series of military conflicts between Herod and the Nabateans, which includes an elaborate commander speech (cf. the shorter report with a less sophisticated speech in *War* 1.364–385) and also indicates that Herod was the first to arm himself and take the lead, while all the other soldiers followed him according to their usual positions. As a result, the Nabateans were immediately thrown into consternation, Josephus says (*Ant.* 15.114–115).

Nevertheless, as we have seen in connection with Herod as a client king of the Romans, Josephus undermines the positive image of Herod as a successful military commander in *Jewish Antiquities*. He does this by adding or leaving out certain details or retouching his description. In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus leaves out Cleopatra's request that Herod become one of her generals (*War* 1.279). Furthermore, a flashback to the report of the capture of Jerusalem may suggest that the Roman commander Gaius Sosius was the main captor instead of Herod (*Ant.* 15.2, note the order of the names; cf. *War* 1.327: Sosius assisted Herod). One of the additions in *Jewish Antiquities*, situated in the period when the Parthians and Antigonus were controlling Jerusalem and Herod had to take his close relatives to safety at Masada, describes how Herod panicked once. During the journey to Masada, the wagon with Herod's mother overturned and she was in danger of dying while the enemy was chasing them. Herod's companions had to prevent him from committing suicide (*Ant.* 14.355–358). This brief story, absent in *Jewish War* (cf. 1.264), is a crack in the image of Herod as a courageous, cool-headed, and successful military commander.

14.4 Energetic Builder

The third theme of Herod's success story is his depiction as a highly

ambitious and successful initiator of building projects. Josephus's impressive reports—a continuous description in *Jewish War* (1.401–428) and scattered information in *Jewish Antiquities* (mostly in Book 15)—are selective and do not completely match the results of archaeological research (Netzer 2006). Josephus tells us that Herod renovated the Hasmonean palace in Jerusalem and afterwards built a new palace in this city as well as several palaces in Jericho. He fortified and rebuilt Samaria, which he renamed Sebaste (honoring Augustus), and he rebuilt Anthedon along the coast, which he renamed Agrippeum (after his friend Agrippa). These names link up with a motive highlighted in *Jewish War*: Herod built or renovated buildings or cities and named them after his close friends or relatives (1.417–419). He renovated the Antonia fortress near the temple, and he built the luxurious fortress Herodium in the countryside south of Jerusalem, which was provided with an expensive water system and named after himself (1.419–421). He also built a temple in honor of Augustus at Paneion, in the north. In *Jewish War*, Josephus also lists benefactions to cities and institutions outside Herod's kingdom, including his sponsorship and his acting as president of the Olympic Games (1.422–428; cf. *Ant.* 16.17–19, 146–149).

A striking point in the sections about the king's building activities is Josephus's frequent use of superlatives in the descriptions of the buildings. The section about Herod's renovation of the temple in *Jewish Antiquities* (15.380–425) is full of praise for the king. Josephus calls, for example, Herod's Royal Portico (a part of the temple complex) “the most remarkable work under the sun” (15.411–412; see also 15.298, 318, 336, 339). He notes that the harbor of Caesarea Maritima (*War* 1.408–415; *Ant.* 15.293, 331–341), another most glorious project, was larger than the Piraeus, Athens' famous harbor (*War* 1.410). This is clearly an overstatement, but it presents Herod in a very favorable light. Josephus underpins this positive image by emphasizing that Herod was very much involved in these building projects as a planner and architect. He writes about Caesarea:

He [i.e., Herod] devoted himself to making a magnificent layout. And he set it all up, very carefully, with buildings of white stone, adorning it with a most costly palace and public buildings; also with a harbor, which was the biggest project and created the most labor.

(*Ant.* 15.331–332; see also 15.295–297, 380)

Once again it has to be noted that in *Jewish Antiquities* Josephus deconstructs the image of Herod as a successful builder by his comments and by putting it in a context that implies criticism of the king. One way of doing this is the repeated suggestion that the building activities were necessary because Herod had a security problem: he had to protect himself from his own people and make sure that foreigners would not become aware of this problem. Josephus presents this as Herod's motive for the building of Caesarea, to which he

refers as a “citadel against the entire [Jewish] people” (*Ant.* 15.293; see also 15.292, 330). In *Jewish Antiquities* 15.291, a passage that forms the transition to the description of several building projects, Josephus also indicates that security was an important motive (see [Chapter 15](#) by Kaden in this volume): “So he decided to enclose the [Jewish] people from every side, so that if they would revolt, the rebellion would not become manifest.”

A second motif that results in a critical re-interpretation of the building projects arises in *Jewish Antiquities*, where Josephus’s descriptions imply that Herod consistently transgressed the Jewish laws by introducing foreign customs in connection with his building activities. A key passage is the story about Herod’s quadrennial festival in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 15.267–291), which is absent in *Jewish War* (van Henten 2008). Herod built a theater and an amphitheater within Jerusalem for the celebration of this festival (*Ant.* 15.268), and around the theater he erected inscriptions in honor of the emperor as well as trophies that Augustus had won during wars (*Ant.* 15.272). These trophies, which may have been—as was usual—dummies of defeated soldiers with their armor, were considered to be a violation of the second commandment, and triggered a serious protest by the Jerusalemites and a conspiracy to murder the king (*Ant.* 15.277–290). The protesters interpreted the trophies as images of humans, which were forbidden according to their ancestral customs (*Ant.* 15.277, 279). Although Herod seems to have managed the protest prudently, the main issue for Josephus here is clearly that the king transgressed the Law with this festival and the trophies, and corrupted the Jewish way of life (*Ant.* 15.267–268, 276–277). He makes the same point in *Jewish Antiquities*’ version of the golden eagle episode at the end of Herod’s life (*Ant.* 17.148–164; especially 17.149–152, 159).

A third adaptation of the narrative of *Jewish War* in *Jewish Antiquities* concerns Josephus’s comments following his report of Herod’s benefactions outside his kingdom, which offer very negative reflections on Herod’s character (*Ant.* 16.150–159; below). The main point is that Josephus calls upon his readers to look at Herod’s benefactions in perspective, i.e., connect them with the sufferings that he inflicted upon his subjects and his relatives (*Ant.* 16.151; cf. Pastor 2003; Udoh 2005, 113–206). Some lines further, Josephus notes that Herod’s subjects were burdened with the expenses for the king’s benefactions to others (*Ant.* 16.154), which implies that Josephus turns the admiration for Herod as a builder and benefactor into a criticism.

14.5 Dissension within Herod’s Family

So far we have seen that both *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* depict Herod as a successful king because he fulfilled the task assigned to him by the Romans and excelled as a military commander and builder. In *Jewish*

Antiquities, Josephus undermines this positive image, at least marginally. For both writings, however, one should note that the positive picture is only half of Josephus's message. Other deeds imply—in line with the conventional ideas in Greco-Roman society about a successful ruler—that Herod ultimately failed as a king. Many of these deeds are connected with Herod's family, and Josephus's main argument in this respect is that these deeds disqualified the king as a ruler. Herod was incapable of ending the hectic dissension within his family at the court, which was caused, according to Josephus's description, by competing factions of women with their sons as well as the scheming of Herod's brother Pheroras and sister Salome (van Henten 2011b; on women in Josephus's works, see [Chapter 12](#) by Ilan in this volume). These conflicts resulted in the execution of several close relatives, including his wife Mariamme I and Herod's sons by her (Alexander and Aristobulus). Family members were involved in rebellious activities against Herod, and the king's succession, preceded by a series of ever changing wills, was one big mess. The grand picture of this family history is the same in both works, but there are nuances, of course, also because Josephus's critical portrayal of Herod is much more elaborate and negative in *Jewish Antiquities*.

This bifocal perspective on Herod's rule, differentiating between Herod's deeds as a ruler and his lack of control over family affairs, is apparent from a pivotal passage in *Jewish War* that forms the transition from the positive description of Herod's building projects and benefactions (1.401–428) to the long section on Herod's family matters (1.431–673): “Fortune, however, made [Herod] pay for his public success with troubles at home. The origin of his ill-fated condition was a woman, with whom he was very much in love” (*War* 1.431; cf. 1.665). This woman was the Hasmonean princess, Mariamme I, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II, whom Herod's father, Antipater, had served loyally. Herod and Mariamme must have known each other for some time and they may have loved each other, as Josephus implies at least in *Jewish Antiquities* (e.g., 15.82, 209, 238). This marital bond connected Herod's family even closer to the Hasmonean royal dynasty and probably strengthened Herod's position (see *War* 1.240) and helped to legitimate it after he had become king. Herod married Mariamme in Samaria in 37 B.C.E. during his siege of Jerusalem (*War* 1.344, 432; *Ant.* 14.467), when she was about 17. She had been betrothed to Herod in 42 B.C.E. (*War* 1.241; *Ant.* 14.300). The benefit of a bond between the Hasmonean and Herodian families seems obvious, but Josephus's reports highlight other matters: factional strife, plots against Herod, as well as repeated actions by the king against the Hasmoneans, whom he apparently saw as potential competitors for the throne.

The passage quoted above from *Jewish War* 1.431 explicitly blames Herod's love of his wife Mariamme for the troubles within Herod's family, but reading on in the family section of *Jewish War* results in a different picture: Herod was constantly being manipulated by his relatives, most wickedly by the

perfidious Antipater, his son by his first wife, Doris. The important thing to note is that Herod apparently let this happen and failed to control the affairs in his own household. The theme of dissension within the family is connected with an ongoing power struggle of several factions, in which women played a major role. In *Jewish War* 1.436–437, Josephus explains that Mariamme hated Herod because he had murdered her grandfather Hyrcanus and her brother Jonathan-Aristobulus (*War* 1.433–434, 437). He adds that Mariamme for this reason started to insult Herod's mother Cyprus and his sister Salome (*War* 1.438). Cyprus and Salome for their part slandered Mariamme and made several severe accusations against her, which ultimately led to Mariamme's downfall and execution. This implies that there were two competing factions of women at the court: a Hasmonean one existing of Mariamme and her supporters, and a faction around Cyprus and Salome. As a matter of fact, Josephus's narrative implies that there were several other factions, including one of Doris and Antipater and one around the wife of Herod's brother Pheroras (e.g., *War* 1.568–571).

14.6 Attempts to Overthrow Herod

The dissension within Herod's family is connected with a second motif: several passages in *Jewish War* suggest that Mariamme's sons as well as Antipater aimed at taking over the throne from Herod. This is less plausible concerning Mariamme's sons than it is for Antipater, but Josephus points to such attempts in both cases (van Henten 2011b). He writes that Alexander and Aristobulus hated Herod for executing their mother, and that they considered him to be their enemy. Josephus also indicates that both sons, after their return from Rome, where they had been educated, behaved as arrogantly and provocatively as their mother had (*War* 1.445–449, 468). Several passages refer to Mariamme's sons' alleged attempts to overthrow their father's rule (e.g., *War* 1.443, 446, 488–491). Strikingly, nowhere in the Herod narrative in *Jewish War* does Josephus provide evidence that Alexander and Aristobulus were actually plotting against their father, and a passage in the section about their trial in Berytus indicates that Herod had very little evidence against them (*War* 1.540; cf. 1.530, 539). This puts the blame for their deaths on Herod.

The picture of Antipater is very different. He returned to the court because Herod decided to use him as a bulwark against the other two sons. Antipater was continuously scheming to have his stepbrothers killed and to take over the throne from his father (e.g., *War* 1.450–451, 628). He manipulated his father and fed his hatred against his sons by Mariamme (*War* 1.455, 473). Once, Josephus uses the keyword *stasis* ("factional strife, rebellion") when he describes the struggle between Alexander and Aristobulus, on the one hand, and Antipater, on the other (*War* 1.467).

The order of the events is different in *Jewish Antiquities*, but this work also indicates, more elaborately and in louder tones, that Herod failed to control his family and triggered repeated attempts to overthrow his rule. At the beginning of Book 15 already, directly after Herod's capture of Jerusalem, Josephus focuses on conflicts within Herod's family by highlighting the discontent of Herod's mother-in-law Alexandra and her repeated attempts to undermine the king's rule. Alexandra betrayed her son-in-law by asking Herod's arch-enemy Cleopatra VII three times for help (*Ant.* 15.23–87). Josephus characterizes Alexandra as a quarrelsome woman (*philoneikos*), who was “strongly hoping for a political change (*metabolê*)” (*Ant.* 15.166; cf. 15.62, 162, 168). In combination with the dramatic history of Herod and his two sons by Mariamme and the continuous scheming by Antipater until the very end of Herod's life, both spelled out in *Jewish Antiquities*, the basic message of the narrative is that dissension within the family and rebellious activities by the king's relatives lasted from the very beginning to the end of his actual rule. Josephus's vocabulary further highlights this point; when writing about the conflict between Antipater and Herod's sons by Mariamme, he states: “Factions (*stasis*) were struggling in the palace as in a civil war (*emphuliou polemou*) ...” (*Ant.* 16.189).

14.7 Transgressing the Law and Harshness

Alexandra's motive for trying once again to restore the Hasmonean rule (*Ant.* 15.166) is Herod's lawless behavior (*paranomia*) against her family. As indicated already above, Josephus emphasizes in *Jewish Antiquities* that Herod continuously attempted to force foreign practices upon his subjects and that he was repeatedly transgressing Jewish laws in this way (*Ant.* 15.267, 274–277, 281, 288, 365, 368–369; 17.150–151, 158). The episode about the trophies in Book 15 (above) is a case in point, and another event, also narrated only in *Jewish Antiquities*, opens the reader's eyes to Herod being a bad king, although he enjoyed the support of God during most of his rule. In *Jewish Antiquities* 15.373–379 Josephus reports in a flashback about a prophecy of Menahem the Essene that Herod, who was still a boy at that time, would become king. Menahem had foreknowledge of the future through God. The episode is set in Herod's seventeenth regnal year (*Ant.* 15.354), which probably concerns 21/20 or 20/19 B.C.E. The context implies that this was a successful period for Herod, but Josephus also indicates that Herod had to face serious problems because many of his subjects were hostile towards him (*Ant.* 15.365–370). Herod tried to tackle this with extremely harsh measures: he ordered his subjects to work continuously and banned meetings in “the city,” most probably Jerusalem (*Ant.* 15.366). In this context the flashback to Menahem's prophecy indicates that Herod would become king, but it

disqualifies Herod's rule at the same time because the king would fail, despite support from God, to act in line with the two key virtues for ruling well (*Ant.* 15.376): justice (*dikaïosunê*) and the proper attitude towards God (*eusebeia*). Herod's lawless behavior (*paranomia*) is, as a matter of fact, the flipside of these virtues, and Menahem predicts, correctly according to Josephus's narrative, that God would ultimately punish Herod for his unlawful deeds (cf. the gruesome description of Herod's final illnesses presented as a punishment by God in *Ant.* 17.168–171).

It has been noted already several times in passing that Josephus presents Herod in *Jewish Antiquities* as an extremely harsh ruler. This is another motif highlighted particularly in *Jewish Antiquities*. Most of Book 16 of *Jewish Antiquities* deals with the lamentable fate of Mariamme's sons by Herod, Alexander and Aristobulus, but the introduction to this book sets the tone with a brief report about a new law concerning burglary, to which Josephus adds his own comments (*Ant.* 16.1–5). Josephus calls Herod's law "an offence against [Jewish] religion" (*hamartian pros tên thrêskeian*, *Ant.* 16.2). He notes that it was very hard for those who were caught and that it also implied the abolition of the ancestral customs. Josephus explains this point by contrasting Herod's law with the ancestral laws, which were based upon restitution and compensation by temporary slavery if restitution was impossible (cf. *Exod.* 21:3, 37; 22:3, 6, 8). Herod's law implied that thieves were sold as slaves and exported to foreign territories (*Ant.* 16.1). Its consequence was not only that these slaves had to live among non-Jews (*Ant.* 16.2), which rendered the observance of the Jewish practices very difficult, but it also made their slavery unlimited (*Ant.* 16.3) because non-Jews could hardly be expected to keep the Jewish laws. The law was harsh and unlawful, and exemplary of the king's other brutal measures regarding his subjects.

14.8 Explaining Failure: Herod's Character

Josephus comments several times on Herod's deeds by explaining them as the results of the king's character, again differentiating between good and bad behavior. A typical passage concerns Herod's building project of the harbor city of Caesarea: after reporting that the king rebuilt the city with white stones and embellished it with the most magnificent palaces, Josephus comments that Herod "demonstrated in this way his innate magnanimity (*to phusei megalonoun*)" (*War* 1.408). In a similar way Josephus connects Herod's splendid building achievements in *Jewish Antiquities* with his love of beauty (*to philokalein*, *Ant.* 15.298) and his ambition to be remembered (e.g., *Ant.* 15.298, 380; 16.153; 17.163; cf. *War* 1.265, 419). We have already seen that Josephus in *Jewish War* indicates that the Romans backed Herod because of his bravery and energy (*War* 1.282–283). Herod's courage is highlighted in

passages about military conflicts. In a comment on Herod's success, Josephus emphasizes that Herod's body and soul fully aligned with each other, which explained that he was an extremely successful hunter as well as an irresistible fighter (*War* 1.429–430; Sievers 2009, 91–94). Another important positive character trait is Herod's loyalty: Josephus emphasizes that Herod was keen on being considered a loyal friend of his Roman patrons. In *Jewish War* 1.387–393 and *Jewish Antiquities* 15.183–198, Josephus describes Herod's crucial visit to Octavian after the Battle of Actium, and he reports how Herod was able to persuade Octavian by an impressive speech that he would be as loyal to him as he had been to Mark Antony (*War* 1.388, 391–392; *Ant.* 15.193, 195). In *Jewish War*, Josephus attributes this success right at the start to Herod's high-mindedness as a king (*to de phronêma basileus*, 1.387). In *Jewish Antiquities*, such appraisal is sometimes canceled out by Josephus's comments: he acknowledges that Herod's magnanimity and his paying court to the Romans in line with his royal status increased his power, but he adds that this had negative consequences because the king was forced to violate the Jewish customs in this way (15.327–328).

Josephus also mentions negative character traits in *Jewish War*, which more or less match his distinction between successful politics and failure in private matters. These traits become apparent in the section about the disastrous fate of Herod's sons, Alexander and Aristobulus. Herod had to be pleased by others and he had a suspicious mind (*War* 1.492–493, 515, 533, 538). He was cruel towards his sons (*War* 1.534) and indulged in receiving negative reports about others (*War* 1.533). The net result of these characteristics could only mean disaster, as Josephus indicates: "The palace was filled with terrible lawlessness (*anomia*). For everyone, out of enmity or personal hatred, contrived calumnies, and many misused the murderous passion of the king against their enemies" (*War* 1.493). In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus elaborates these negative traits, which results in a more negative portrayal. To give only one example: at the end of Book 16, he offers a retrospective of Herod's conflict with Alexander and Aristobulus (*Ant.* 16.395–404), in which he criticizes Herod severely for executing his sons. The execution was an impious deed, and he concludes that Herod did not deserve respect, since he let his emotions prevail, and that his wavering behavior was despicable: "his delaying and lingering truly do not lead to an excuse for him" (*Ant.* 16.403, also 16.400, 402).

Some of Josephus's comments imply that Herod's character was complex, a mixture of good and bad traits. In *Jewish War* 1.400, Josephus observes in connection with a grant of land to Herod that the king's beneficial relationship with the Romans enhanced his prosperity, and he continues as follows: "his high-mindedness (*phronêma*) rose even more, and the better part of his noble character (*to pleon tês megalonoias*) was directed towards the proper attitude to God (*eusebeia*).” In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus is more explicit about this

complexity and he especially highlights the negative side of Herod's character. In a passage that formulates feedback on Herod's benefactions to non-Jews, Josephus focuses on Herod's character as well as on the consequences for his subjects:

Now it occurred to others to wonder about the contradictions in his character's inclinations. For when we look at the munificence (*philotimia*) and benefactions he conferred on all persons, it would not be possible that someone, even among those who have very little respect for him, refused to agree that he had a most beneficent character (*euergetikôtatêi ... têtêi phusêi*). But if one were to look at the punishments and crimes that he showed concerning his subjects and closest relatives, one would also observe the harshness and inexorability of his character (*to sklêron kai to dusparaitêton tou tropou*). One would be forced to believe that he was a brute and hostile to every feeling of moderation.

(*Ant.* 16.150–151)

Josephus continues by arguing that these apparent contradictions were in fact the results of one overpowering emotion: Herod's character was dominated by his love of honor (*philotimia*, *Ant.* 16.152–153).

The final cut of the negative re-interpretation of Herod's character in *Jewish Antiquities*, however, is Josephus's argument that Herod was a tyrant by nature, which further explains the executions of his close relatives and the harsh treatment of his subjects (van Henten 2011a). Josephus makes this point in a sophisticated way, by feeding his readers time and again hints of the king's tyrannical character up to the end of Herod's career (*Ant.* 14.165; 15.70, 222, 321, 353; 16.1–5). When Herod had become fatally ill, Josephus presents us with the full picture of Herod as a tyrant in his revised report about the golden eagle episode (17.148–164). In the introduction and conclusion of this story, we come across common stereotypes of wicked tyrants: rage, pure anger, bitterness, and cruelty characterized Herod's behavior, as well as the conviction that the Jewish people despised him (*Ant.* 17.148, 164). Josephus implies that Herod was, in fact, a tyrant starting from his first public appearance, but that it became fully manifest only at the end of his life.

Josephus elaborates this point by indicating in a flashback that Herod was a tyrant by nature. He reports how a group of Jewish petitioners came before Augustus, to argue for the dissolution of the kingdom of the Jews after Herod's death, and listed the king's brutal and lawless acts (*Ant.* 17.304–314). They said Herod was a king only in name and "claimed that he had agreed to take upon himself the ruinous task, as in every tyranny (*en tais tyrannisin hekastais*), of bringing about the destruction of the Jews" (17.304). They added that Herod "had not left off from inventing *all kinds of new measures that matched his character*" (*Ant.* 17.304; cf. 14.165). It should be noted that

this argument is absent in *Jewish War* with one exception, which may result from Josephus's editing of his own earlier work. In the passage parallel to *Jewish Antiquities* 17.304–314 in *Jewish War*, Josephus reports that the petitioners in the Jewish delegation stated, “that it was not to a king that they had submitted but *to the most savage tyrant who had ever lived*” (*War* 2.84). They accused Herod of committing unlawful acts and countless murders, torturing survivors, destroying the cities of the Jews, causing poverty, and making benefactions to non-Jews at the expense of the Jews (*War* 2.84–86). This, in a nutshell, is the picture that Josephus himself creates in *Jewish Antiquities*, but in a much more elaborate way.

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CHAPTER 15

The Herodian Temple in Josephus

David A. Kaden

15.1 Introduction

Josephus's descriptions of the Jerusalem temple provide extensive information about one of Herod's largest building projects, and are the only surviving contemporary reports by a priest who had served in the temple during the first half of the first century C.E. (see *Apion* 1.54; *Life* 1–6; cf. Mason 2009, 11). These accounts form a bridge between the descriptions of the temple in the Hasmonean period and later accounts in the Mishnah. While evaluating purported divergences between Josephus and the Mishnah has engaged numerous scholars, much of these debates extends beyond the scope of the present chapter, which will focus primarily on a comparison between Josephus's two descriptions of the temple in *Judean War* 5.184–247 and *Judean Antiquities* 15.388–425. Manifold discrepancies have been detected between these two versions, including, for example, differing measurements both of the enclosure around the temple mount and the height of the temple, a discrepancy in the number and width of the inner gates, and indication of a more rigidly partitioned Women's Court in *Judean War* 5.198–199 than in *Judean Antiquities* 15.418 (Levine 1994, 234–235). To resolve difficulties such as these, scholars have tended to bypass a strict literary comparison of these two texts in favor of incorporating a wider spread of data from elsewhere to answer historical questions about the temple itself (see Mazar 1975, 111–126; Schwartz 1991, 245–283; Sanders 1992, 59–60; Levine 1994, 2002, 223–225; Bahat 1999; Netzer 2006, 137–178; Ritmeyer 2006; Schwartz and Peleg 2007; Schiffman 2010). The premise of the present investigation, however, is that comparing the twin descriptions of the temple may yield insights beyond merely gauging the trustworthiness of Josephus, or testing the veracity of his promise in *Judean War* 5.247 to provide a more accurate account at a later time (i.e., in *Ant.*); indeed, a side-by-side comparison (Section 15.2) indicates that the two portrayals are complementary, with the later account in *Judean Antiquities* providing supplementary details to the earlier version in *Judean War*. Further, certain nuances that distinguish the two can be isolated and then juxtaposed with the social situation of the later Flavian dynasty under Domitian (Section 15.3)—a social environment that may have provided the impetus for some of the additional details in *Judean Antiquities*. The most glaring differences between the two reports will require

more detailed analysis with some discussion of the relevant archaeological data ([Section 15.4](#)).

15.2 Literary Context and Comparison of *Judean War* 5.184–247 and *Judean Antiquities* 15.388–425

At the literary level, the notion of “Herodian temple” in Josephus’s writings seems to be quite fluid in the sense that its essence is not given but is discursively constructed. Beyond its basic designation as a sacred, physical space with a distinct symbolic significance for the history and religion of first-century C.E. Judeans living in the Roman world, the temple for Josephus seems to be at once anchored in a particular Solomonic-Herodian history (*Ant.*), and also a key player in the complex socio-political matrix of the Judean war with Rome (*War*). Depending on the discursive context, Josephus’s presentation of the temple can vary.

The account in *Judean War* 5 is situated immediately following the acclamation of Vespasian as emperor (4.592–604), the defeat of Vitellius (4.650–652), Titus’s resumption of the campaign in Judea (5.1), which had been stalled in the wake of Nero’s death (*War* 4.497), and the intensification of internal hostilities in Jerusalem (4.503–544, 556–584; 5.2, 21, 98–105). In this way, Josephus provides parallel narratives of the civil wars in Italy and Judea (4.545–555; cf. 5.98), steering these two stories toward the respective capitals of both regions: Rome, the locus of imperial power; Jerusalem, the place of the temple (see *War* 1.4; and 7.157–162 where Vespasian and Titus are lauded for ending civil war and bringing peace; cf. Mason 2005b, 97). Josephus’s readers are imbued with a sense of movement, marching with Titus from Caesarea to the gates of Jerusalem and the beginning of the war’s final phase (5.40–70), where the narrative slows as the importance of minute details is underscored. With the army arrayed outside the walls near the Psephinus and Hippicus Towers (5.133–134) and on the Mount of Olives (5.135), and Titus afforded a view of “the great temple” (5.67; see [Figures 15.1](#) and [15.2](#)), Josephus provides detailed descriptions both of the city and its temple (5.136–183 and 184–247, respectively). The latter almost functions as a character in the broader narrative of *Judean War*, signaling the nation’s fate; its steady pollution becomes the key indicator of national dissolution (see 2.395–400; 4.150–157, 172, 196, 201–207, 215, 242, 261–262, 311, 571; 5.7, 10–19, 100–105, 254, 362–363, 380, 412, 417, 458, 562–566; 6.73, 93–95, 101, 120–130, 165–167, 216, 236–241, 249–284, 288–301, 316–317; 7.148–150, 161–162, 376–379). Moreover, the intricate description of the temple and celebration of its radiance, especially from the perspective of “approaching strangers” (5.222–223), such as Titus and his army, are contrasted with the final depiction of the temple reduced to pieces in *Judean War* 7.148–150,



Figure 15.1 View of the eastern wall of the Temple Mount from the Kidron Valley.

Courtesy of Steve Mason.



Figure 15.2 View of the eastern Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives.

Courtesy of Steve Mason.

The account in *Judean Antiquities* 15, on the other hand, is situated within a broader narrative of Judean history, and plays a comparatively diminished role vis-à-vis its role in *Judean War*. Josephus locates the description of the temple in the midst of a lengthy discussion of Herod the Great’s “acts” (*praxeis*, 15.380), which extends from 14.156 to 17.205. The temple is numbered among Herod’s building projects (e.g., 15.292 “Sebaste”; 15.293

“Strato’s Tower”/“Caesarea”; 15.294 “Gaba”; 15.296–298 temples of Sebastoi; 16.142 “Capharsaba”; etc.; see further in Richardson 2004), which Josephus attributes to the king’s concern both for security and to memorialize his reign (15.295–296, 298, 324, 327, 380, 424; 16.143–144)—a discussion that is compressed in *Judean War* 1.401–428, with Herod named in passing in the actual description of the temple (*War* 5.238). Because *Judean Antiquities* 15 is part of a cycle of Herod stories, it not only incorporates a purported speech by the king (15.382–387), but also portrays him as a kind of second Solomon (compare 15.422 and 8.118 with 1 Kings 8.62–63; see also Rocca 2008, 26–28)—details that are absent from *Judean War* 5. Herod’s speech attempts to mollify an anxious Jerusalem crowd by conjoining the temple renovation with his other building projects that prospered the nation, and by associating the temple project with piety and beauty (15.384; see discussion in Levine 2002, 220–223). The speech also emphasizes the need to rectify the temple’s deficiency of 60 cubits in height (15.384)—a figure probably gleaned from Josephus’s reading of Ezra 6.3 (Schiffman 2010, 7). Additionally, Herod claims to be uniquely qualified to embark on such an endeavor because his reign has been ordained by God, his kingdom enjoys peace and a robust treasury, and he is a friend of Rome (15.387; on the reasons for Herod’s building projects, see Rocca 2008, 155, 158; Richardson 1996, 178–180, 192–194). The crowd’s response is a mixture of skepticism and fear, which elicits a promise from Herod that no construction would begin until all building materials had been prepared in order to ensure completion in a timely manner (15.388–389). Josephus then inserts details about these preparations (15.390), none of which appears in the *Judean War* 5 account.

The overall description in *Judean Antiquities* 15 is shorter than that in *Judean War* 5 by about 550 words in Greek (*War* 5.184–247 contains roughly 1970 words; *Ant.* 15.388–425 contains roughly 1420 words) and is generally less detailed. While there are places where the two accounts overlap, and places where each contains distinct information, a side-by-side comparison indicates that the two complement each other. In terms of the actual details of the temple structure, the general thrust of the description in *Judean Antiquities* 15 focuses on the externals of the temple complex and incorporates Herod’s concern for security, while that in *Judean War* 5 provides greater specificity with respect to the temple’s adornment and its interior (similarly Netzer 2006, 138). In this vein, the first half of the description in *Judean War* leads the reader inward in concentric circles: narration of the enlargement of the temple hill, enclosure walls, and foundations (5.184–189); porticoes and outer court (5.190–192); second court and the prohibition to foreigners (5.193–196); the Women’s Court and description of interior gates (197–205); description of the temple, façade, and interior (5.206–221); particulars about its appearance, the altar, and the need for purity (5.222–227); and description of priestly garments (228–237) and of the Antonia Tower and its purpose (5.238–247). [Figure 15.3](#) is a side-by-side comparison that follows this topography.

(181-188) Solomon's support wall; enlargement of temple hill; new banks added in subsequent generations to widen the hilltop

(189) Foundation stones of 40 cubits

(190-192) Porticoes 30 cubits wide supported by double rows of marble columns 25 cubits high, and with the Antonia Tower made a circuit of 6 stades

(192-198) Second court surrounded by a 3-cubit-high stone balustrade with intermittent signs warning foreigners in Greek or Latin; 14 steps and a 10 cubit terrace; quadrangular shape and its own wall 40 cubits high (exterior) and 25 cubits (interior); flights of 5 steps to the 10 gates: four north, four south, and two east

(199-200) Women's balconies [*gynothekitis*], one north and one south gate for all Jewish women; no gate on west end; porticoes between the gates supported by columns

(201-203) Nine of the gates [mentioned in 198] covered in gold and silver; one gate covered in Corinthian bronze; two doors on each gate measure 30 cubits high by 15 cubits wide; beyond the gates were chambers 30 cubits long by 20 cubits wide by over 40 cubits high, supported by two columns 12 cubits in circumference

(204-205) The Corinthian Gate was 50 cubits high with doors of 40 cubits [high], overlaid with gold and silver by Alexander; 15 steps from Women's Court to the greater gate

(206-208) 12 steps to the temple facade 100 cubits in height and breadth; building behind was narrower by 40 cubits, because the front of the structure extended outward 20 cubits on either side; first gate was 70 cubits high by 24 cubits wide with no doors, covered in gold, through which one could glimpse the gold of the temple

(209-211) Separate chambers within the temple, the first of which was visible and measured 90 cubits high by 50 cubits long by 20 cubits in breadth; its gate was overlaid with gold [see 208], around which were golden vines with human size grape clusters; interior golden doors 55 cubits high by 16 cubits wide in front of which hung a veil of Babylonian tapestry of blue, scarlet and purple, typifying the universe, and representing air, fire, and sea, respectively

(212-219) Sanctuary was 60 cubits high by 60 cubits long by 20 cubits wide; the first 40 cubits contained the lampstand, table, and altar of incense, the seven branches of the lampstand represent the planets; the twelve loaves on the table represent the Zodiac and the year; the incense indicated that all things are God's; the furthest interior [Holy of Holies] was 20 cubits and screened by a veil

(220-221) Priests' chambers of three stories, accessed through entrances on either side of the gateway, those added 40 cubits to the 60 cubits of the ground floor

(222-227) Exterior covered in gold plates so that it gleamed in the sun; parts not covered in gold were whetted golden spikes to prevent birds from landing; some stones measured 45 cubits length by 5 in height by 6 wide; altar 15 cubits high by 50 cubits in breadth by 50 cubits in length with horn-like projections at the corners; no iron tool was used in building; stone purifier 1 cubit high surrounding the sanctuary and altar; purity requirement to enter the upper complex

(228-237) Priests with physical defects could partake of their birthright portion but not officiate; unblemished priests wore holy vestments and abstained from alcohol; when entering the innermost sanctuary, the high priest wore linen breeches and vest, tasseled blue robe adorned with golden bells and pomegranates (symbolizing thunder and lightning, respectively), multicolored embroidered sash, ephod and its stones on which the names of Israel's tribes were engraved, and linen mitre

(238-247) Antonia Tower situated at the meeting of the western and northern porticoes; built on a rock 50 cubits high and testified to Herod's "genius"; smooth exterior; 3-cubit-high wall at the cul-de-sac behind which the tower extended upward 40 cubits, palatial interior with apartments, cloisters, baths, and courtyards; at the four corners of the roof stood towers, three of which had turrets 50 cubits high, while the southeast tower was 70 cubits high; headquarters of Roman cohort where they maintained security during festivals

(297-302) Temple hill; rocky ascent that Solomon encompassed with a wall; Herod's building materials included "lead" to bind the rocks together and joints fastened with "iron clamps"; leveling of upper surface; enclosure rotated 4 stades; Solomon's portico; spoils from wars against barbarians arrayed around the temple, dedicated by Herod

(410-416) Western part of the complex had four gates: one leading to the king's palace; two to the suburbs; one to the upper city; on southern side of complex was the Royal portico [also] with 162 Corinthian-style columns in four rows, one of which was attached to the wall built of stone; circumference of each column equaled that of three men with outstretched arms; 27 feet high with a double molding on the base; four rows made three aisles, the inner two being 30 feet wide by 4 stades long by over 50 feet high, but the middle aisle was one and a half times wider and twice as high; ceilings adorned with sculptures; rained ceiling in the middle aisle and a wall all polished; (396) Porticoes surrounded the temple

(417) Second court accessed by stairs, surrounded by a stone balustrade [*strophodon*] with an inscription warning foreigners of death penalty

(418) Three sets of gates on north and south of the inner court, and one large gate on the east for the ritually clean and their wives

(419-420a) Sacred court forbidden to women; "land/priests'" court where the temple stood with the altar; Herod not permitted to enter

(cf. 418)

(391) Herod had a new foundation, erecting the temple 100 cubits long and 20 cubits in height, which sagged and was to be raised during the time of Nero

(393) Temple building was lower on each side, higher in middle, and visible from a distance

(394-395) Entrance doors and the lintels over them were equal to the temple itself in height; multicolored hangings; purple colors and interwoven designs of pillars; over these was a golden vine of exquisite workmanship with grape clusters

(392) Temple built of hard white stones, measuring 28 cubits long by 8 cubits high by 12 cubits wide

(403-409, 424) High priest's vestments had been deposited in the tower since the Hasmonean period, a practice continued by Herod [cf. 18.90-95 where the reason Herod granted the vestments was to prevent a revolt], and the Romans after his death; under Tiberius, the governor Vitellius petitioned for the vestments to come under Judean care, which was granted until the death of Agrippa I, when Cassius Longinus and Cuspius Fadus reclaimed them; envoys to Claudius petitioned for their return to Judean authority, and Agrippa II assisted; Herod renovated the tower and renamed it "Antonina"; (421) secret passageway from the tower to the inner court of the temple for Herod in case of a revolt

(420b-423, 425) Outer courts built in 8 years; temple built in 18 months; Herod sacrificed 300 oxen, day of completion was the anniversary of Herod's accession, rain only fell at night

Figure 15.3 Comparison of the temple construction in *Judean War 5* and *Antiquities 15*.

This comparison illustrates areas of similarity, disagreement, and places where the two accounts are complementary. In general, *Judean Antiquities 15* is less detailed; however, there are several places where it contains

supplementary material not found in *Judean War* 5. These include the details about the Royal Stoa and gates on the western exterior of the complex (15.410–416), the three-chambered gateway for the ritually clean (15.418), brief description of the priest's court (15.419–420), narration of the political circumstances involving the high priest's vestments (15.403–409), the purpose of the Antonia Tower and its secret passageway (15.424), and the summary information about the project's timing and Herod's activities (15.420b–423, 425). Indeed, Josephus seems to only add information in *Judean Antiquities* 15 that is lacking in *Judean War* 5, or, conversely, refrain from too much overlap between the two. Examples of the latter include interior features such as the description of the Corinthian Gate and the sanctuary, details of the temple's adornment (notwithstanding the entrance doors and multicolored hangings in 15.394–395), and no reiteration of specifics about the steps, balustrade, or inscription in the second court (15.417) from *Judean War* 5.193–198.

Some distinct nuances in the two accounts may be ascribed to the theme of security that plays a prominent role in the narratives about Herod's building projects. In *Judean Antiquities* 15, the anxiety of "the multitude" (15.381) about renovating the temple precipitated Herod's speech, which compared the temple project to his previous works, duplicitously suggesting that they were performed more for the nation's security than his own reputation (15.382). Josephus had already indicated, however, that Herod's own security had been the primary impetus (see 15.295). The theme of "security" (*asphaleia*) recurs throughout the cycle of Herod stories, and is returned to at the conclusion of the description (15.409), where Josephus links Herod's fortification of the Antonia Tower to this purpose. He will later identify Herod's fear of rebellion as the reason for adding a passageway from this tower to the inner temple (*Ant.* 15.424). This is markedly different from the *Judean War* 5 account, which underscores the Roman army's interest in the Antonia Tower for security purposes not Herod's (5.244–245). Moreover, the abbreviated cycle of Herod stories in *Judean War* 1.204–673 not only never connects Herod's building projects to a fetish with security, but it never even mentions security as a concern of his! The theme of Herod's security may also account for the supplemental information about the high priest's vestments in *Judean Antiquities* 15.403–409 (compare *War* 5.228–247). When explaining why Herod controlled access to the high priest's vestments by housing them in the Antonia Tower, the additional narrative in *Judean Antiquities* 18.90–95 points to his belief that by guarding them he could stave off revolt. Finally, *Judean Antiquities* 15.396–399 inserts curious details about the strength of the foundation built by Herod (see discussion in Simons 1952, 395). The stones are said to be bound together with "lead," the joints connected with "iron clamps," and the wall's greatness is lauded, each of which coheres with the tendency in *Judean Antiquities* 15 to focus on exterior features of the temple complex, and the concomitant themes of defense and security that are much

more prominent in this account.

15.3 Josephus's Social Situation

Given the literary evidence, it is probably safe to conclude that Josephus intended *Judean Antiquities* 15 to supplement *Judean War* 5. The reason why certain supplementary information was inserted, especially the sway held by the theme of security over the account in *Judean Antiquities* 15, is difficult to discern, but examining Josephus's social situation may provide some insights. Recent scholarship has begun to deal more intentionally with questions of audience, rhetoric, and social situation (see Mason 2005b, 71–100; 2005a, 243–288; Price 2005, 101–118; Spilsbury 2005, 209–228; McLaren 2005, 279–296; Cotton and Eck 2005, 37–52; Jones 2005, 201–208; Barclay 2005, 315–332), as well as addressing the process of book production and publication in antiquity (see Mason 2005b, 78–84, and [Chapter 5](#) by Mason in this volume). Both aspects can help illuminate the complex interplay between writer/editor and audience/context, which may have influenced Josephus's shaping of the data.

Steve Mason (2005b, 84) has noted that the process of book production in the Roman world involved oral performance and the circulation of written drafts to a writer's close friends and associates, with subsequent draft editions being disseminated in widening concentric social circles (cf. Rajak 1983, 63; Downing 1996, 32). Josephus seems to hint at following this procedure with respect to *Judean War* (see *Apion* 1.50–52; *Life* 361–366). Though still an open question, this could nevertheless indicate that *Judean War* was not written for a primarily Judean audience, but for one comprising Roman elites, which may have included elite Judeans (note the caution of Cotton and Eck 2005, 52; cf. Mason 2005b, 78–99). Likewise, *Judean Antiquities* was likely written for a predominantly Roman audience lacking prior knowledge of Judean history (see *Ant.* 1.5). The difference between the two temple accounts then would not be attributable to differences in the ethnic makeup of Josephus's audience, but rather to the time of his writing: *Judean War* 5 was penned some time in the 70s C.E. in the early Flavian dynasty while *Judean Antiquities* 15 was composed under Domitian nearly two decades later (see discussion in Cohen 1979, 84–100).

The paranoia and tension of Domitian's later years are known to have affected members of elite intellectual circles directly (Southern 1997, 101–125; Jones 1992, 122–125). Josephus was probably not immune to this social pressure. Indeed, his vehement criticism of Nicolaus's obsequiousness to Herod and the resulting vitiation of key historical events (*Ant.* 16.183–184; cf. 20.154) may provide a window into his own cautious writing practices in the 80s and 90s C.E. under Domitian. Since Josephus seems to have deployed “figured

speech” (see Ahl 1984, 177) in his writings to subtly criticize the Flavians (Mason 2005a, 243–288), it should not be surprising to find similar tactics in his accounts of the Herodian temple (see Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.65, 67; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 3.13; cf. Mason 2005a, 252). For example, by underscoring Herod’s paranoia about security in *Judean Antiquities* 15, Josephus could be reflecting the environment of paranoia that permeated Domitian’s Rome in the early 90s C.E. Josephus’s critique of the Judean king is similar to common criticisms of Domitian (compare Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 67.14.4 and Suetonius, *Domitian* 10.1–11.3 with the summary in *Ant.* 16.156; cf. 16.4). Further, Josephus’s opinion of Herod shifts dramatically between *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities*. In the former, Herod’s “genius” (*megalonous*) is celebrated (*War* 5.238; cf. 1.408), while in the latter he is criticized as a barbarous man who was enslaved to his passions (*Ant.* 17.180–181, 191; 19.328–329). While hypothesizing about the pressure a given social situation may have exerted on an ancient writer can be problematic, it is certainly plausible to imagine Josephus hiding a critique of Domitian in his caricature of Herod to account for the strong link between “security” and building projects, among which the Herodian temple was only one. This is especially so when it is remembered that “figured speech” or safe criticism was “the normal mode of discourse throughout much of Greek and Roman antiquity” (Ahl 1984, 204). In Josephus’s case, the irony is that the temple, which was supposed to be an everlasting memorial to Herod (*Ant.* 15.380), was in ruins in the 90s C.E.—an ironic testament to the king’s Domitian-like paranoia, and a subtle criticism of the emperor in power.

15.4 Discrepancies and Archaeological Data

While certain nuances in Josephus’s two descriptions can be reasonably accredited to social context and presumably to his own editorial work, other differences are ostensibly more difficult to account for, and raise questions about the degree to which Josephus is a trustworthy historical source. Assessments of his reliability have run the gamut from doubt to affirmation (see Bilde 1988, 191–200; cf. Broshi 1982; Shanks 2007, 70) and have yielded a nearly endless assortment of hypotheses, among which Levine’s (1994; 2002) is especially notable for its ingenuity. He argues that Josephus is describing two different structures: *Judean Antiquities* 15 is assumed to be detailing features that were coterminous with Herod’s reign (ca. 20 B.C.E.) while the temple in *Judean War* 5 is the one viewed by Titus after ongoing renovations had ceased (Levine 1994, 238; cf. Simons 1952, 398–399; see also *Ant.* 20.219; *War* 5.36; John 2.20). This hypothesis will provide a point of reference to evaluate the data below.

It should be noted at the outset that even though Josephus was a priest and had

access to the structure, it is unlikely in the extreme that he physically measured the temple's features, especially during the turmoil of the Judean War. It is also unlikely that the preponderance of details derive from memory, though some of course might, such as, for example, the circumference of the Corinthian columns equivalent to three men interlocking their outstretched arms (*Ant.* 15.413; Sanders 1992, 60 argues that the description of the temple in *Ant.* derives from memory). Josephus's intricate portrait of the temple then should probably be attributed to his use of written sources (cf. Richardson 2004, 262–266), whether manuals (Kaufman 2004, 10), Roman notebooks (and maybe their living authors; cf. Sanders 1992, 60; also 500 n. 36), or architectural drawings (cf. Schiffman 2010, 8), perhaps smuggled from Jerusalem, given to Josephus by the Roman army, or possibly even archived in Rome like the *gentes devictae* lists that formed the basis for the Agrippa II speech in *Judean War* 2.345–401 (see Lindner 1972, 22; Kaden 2011); the account in *Middot* may be based on preexisting manuscripts as well: see Kaufman 2004, 10; Shanks 2007, 68–69). The accuracy of these materials is impossible to determine; however, in at least two instances archaeology has unmistakably corroborated Josephus: in *Judean Antiquities* 15.410 he mentions four western gates leading into the temple complex, which has been confirmed (see Bahat 1999, 47), and in both accounts he mentions the warning sign prohibiting foreigners from advancing beyond the Gentile Court (*War* 5.193–194; *Ant.* 15.417), which has been substantiated with the discovery of two inscriptions that contain notices to this effect (Bahat 1999, 52).

Some discrepancies in the two accounts, however, derive from measurements that strain credulity when archaeology is taken into consideration, even if they can be reasonably explained at the literary level. For example, in *Judean Antiquities* 15.392 the temple's white stones are measured at 25 cubits long (14 meters, on the assumption that a cubit is 0.56 meters; Schwartz and Peleg 2007, 214) by 8 cubits high (4.48 meters) by 12 cubits wide (6.72 meters), while in *Judean War* 5.224 some of the stones are 45 cubits long (25.2 meters) by 5 cubits high (2.8 meters) by 6 cubits wide (3.36 meters). On the one hand, this difference appears to be merely complementary, since *Judean War* does not rule out the possibility of there being differently sized stones. On the other hand, Josephus's measurements in *Judean War* exceed the largest ashlar stones of the temple complex, discovered in the master course of the Western Wall tunnel (42 feet long by 11 feet high and weighing 570 tons; Shanks 2007, 94; Bahat 1999, 46; cf. *War* 5.189); and their length of 45 cubits would make them nearly half the entire length of the temple building itself, which Josephus places at 100 cubits (*War* 5.207; *Ant.* 15.391)! Sanders (1992, 63) intimates that this discrepancy could be rectified if the lesser length of the stones in *Judean Antiquities* 15.392 were merged with the lesser height and breadth from *Judean War* 5.224, yielding a result of 25 x 5 x 6 cubits that would better approximate the size of ashlar stones in the wall. Since no stones from Herod's temple can be examined, any measurements stem from comparative

calculations with ashlar in the outlying walls; based on this method, Josephus's measurements in both accounts appear to be exaggerated, however, without material evidence of the temple stones, all analysis is inferential. In any case, *Judean Antiquities* seems to provide revised figures, while the more imposing length in *Judean War* coheres with a broader literary strategy of using the temple to surface certain narrative features, in this instance its magnificence as a possible means to exalt its Roman conquerors (compare *War* 5.222–227 and *Judean Antiquities* 15.392); note also Josephus's suppression of the *evocatio deorum* ritual almost certainly is a function of this literary strategy: Titus did not need to evoke the deity because it had already left the sacred premises and sided with Rome (see Kloppenborg 2005; cf. *War* 2.390; 5.367).

Also difficult to account for is the divergence in the measurements of the temple mount surround (*peribolos*). In *Judean War* 5.192 it is 6 stades, while in *Judean Antiquities* 15.400 it is 4 stades (Levine 1994, 234–235). Furthermore, in *Judean Antiquities* 15.400, Josephus seems to indicate that all four sides of the surround were equidistant, 1 stade each (cf. *Middot* 2.1; though see the discussion in Kaufman 2004, 105–106). The complex is, however, trapezoidal, with differing measurements on each side—those conducted on the outer court (*Haram al-Shariff*) by the IDF Engineering Corps in the wake of the Six-Day War are quite precise: the northern wall is 305.75 meters; the southern wall is 277.75 meters; the western wall is 478 meters; and the eastern wall is 452 meters (Schwartz and Peleg 2007, 215). The perimeter is 1513.3 meters or 8.14 stades—a stade being roughly 186 meters on the assumptions that a Greek stade was equal to 600 feet, and a Greek foot equaled 0.31 meters (cf. Simons 1952, 395, n. 1). Thus, $600 \times 0.31 = 186$ meters—a number corroborated by modern measurements that approximate the surround of Masada to be 1,300 meters, corresponding to the 7 stades mentioned by Josephus in *Judean War* 7.286: $1,300/7 = 185.71$ meters per stade (following Schwartz and Peleg 2007, 210–211). It seems, therefore, that both *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities* contain incorrect measurements of the temple complex. Levine's hypothesis, that *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities* have different temple structures in view, falters at this point, as he seems to recognize (see Levine 1994, 241). A more workable approach has been recently proposed, which attributes the mismatched numbers to different referents. *War* provides a measurement of the outer perimeter of the Outer Court (totaling 1,116 meters or 6 stades; see diagram in Schwartz and Peleg 2007, 212, and the discussion 216–217; cf. Hollis 1934, 34, 36) and not of the exterior perimeter of entire complex, while *Judean Antiquities* seems to circumscribe an elevated area distinct from the outer court that may be coterminous with the rabbinic *Azarah* (to *deuteronomy* hieron: *War* 5.193; *Ant.* 15.417; Schwartz and Peleg 2007, 208). This explanation assumes that Josephus twice alludes to the elevated court in *Judean Antiquities* 15.400 and 417, which is not implausible since the parenthetical

reference in 15.400 describes what appears to be distinct layers in the structure that are explained in greater detail in 15.417. This hypothesis helps sustain the argument of this chapter that Josephus seems to position his two main accounts of the temple as complementary.

Finally, Josephus's dense language makes it uncertain whether the architecture of the inner gates differs (three-way entry in *Ant.* 15.418; double doors in *War* 5.202), whether men and women were separated immediately upon entry into the sacred precincts (compare *Ant.* 15.418–419 and *War* 5.198–199), and whether there is a discrepancy in the temple's height (120 cubits in *Ant.* 15.391, 100 cubits in *Judean War* 5.207, or 90 cubits in 5.209; cf. also the differences in the date of construction: Herod's fifteenth year in *Judean War* 1.401; eighteenth year in *Ant.* 15.380; see discussion in Levine 2002, 225–226). Levine (1994, 235) cites each of these in support of his hypothesis that Josephus is describing two different temple structures. Among several architectural modifications that Levine believes occurred in the interval between Herod and Titus, he notes that the number of inner gates surrounding the temple increased and the portals were changed from triple to double, and the Women's Court became more rigidly partitioned (Levine 1994, 239; cf. Büchler 1898, 712, 718). A key impediment to the argument is the lack of extant archaeological data to support these assertions, since the temple mount is inaccessible to investigation. Additionally, the primary textual evidence is from Josephus himself, which makes the argument a circular one. Moreover, it is not completely clear that these discrepancies are irreconcilable. The issue of the temple's differing heights, for instance, appears to be resolved if the variance between 100 cubits in *Judean War* 5.207 and 90 cubits in *Judean War* 5.209 is due to an architectural feature related to the discharge of rainwater as Busink argues (1980, 1116–1117); in any case, a straightforward reading of 5.207 and 209 reveals that Josephus is distinguishing between exterior and interior facets of the temple building, even if his precise meaning is vague. The difference of 20 cubits between *Judean Antiquities* 15.391 and *Judean War* 5.207 is attributed by Josephus to “sinking” (*Ant.* 15.391; *sunizêsantôn tôn themeliôn hypebê*), which was to be rectified during the time of Nero (cf. *War* 5.36). In both of these instances, Josephus has provided complementary information in his two accounts, or to put it differently, the later account in *Judean Antiquities* supplements the earlier one in *Judean War*. Likewise, with respect to the number of interior gates and the partitioning of the Women's Court, in neither case are there blatant discrepancies. When combined, the two accounts seem to provide complementary information about ten gates (*War* 5.201). There were four on the north and four on the south (*War* 5.198), of which three on the north and three on the south led directly into the inner court (*Ant.* 15.418)—Josephus describes them as a pair of triptych gates (depending on the manuscript, the word he uses could be *tristoichous*, *tristichous*, *triptychous*, or *treis toichous*; see Marcus and Wikgren 1963, LCL, 202 n. 3). The other two gates allowed

entry into the area designated for women on the north and south, but probably not to the actual court itself, since the word Josephus uses to describe this area (*gynaikônitin*; *War* 5.199) does not seem to refer to the Women's Court of a different name (*gynaikôn diateichismatos*; *War* 5.206; cf. *Apion* 2.103–104)—the gates may have led to balconies above (Kaufman 2004, 82–83; cf. *Middot* 2.5). The Women's Court was entered by the final two gates on the east (*War* 5.198), one of which led into the inner court and was forbidden to women (the “Corinthian Gate”; *War* 5.201), while the other on the easternmost side could be entered by both men and women (*Ant.* 15.418). The name and placement of the gates described in *Judean War* 5.204 and *Judean Antiquities* 15.418 are not completely clear, and Josephus seems ambivalent about the relationship between the well-adorned “Corinthian Gate” in 5.201 and the well-adorned gate “beyond the Corinthian Gate” in 5.204 (see discussion in Schwartz 1991). The supposition here is that *Judean Antiquities* supplements *Judean War* by providing details in 15.418 about the gate on the easternmost end of the Women's Court, which he does not label “Corinthian,” and through which both men and women could pass. This implies that *Judean War* 5.201 and 204 refer to the Corinthian Gate (taking the phrase *hê d'hyper* in 5.204 as a content marker; cf. similar uses in *Ant.* 3.262; 15.347).

15.5 Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that reading Josephus's two accounts of the temple at the literary level can illuminate Josephus's creativity and yield information about the degree to which the social pressure of Domitian's Rome may have been insinuated into the details of his writing. Additionally, a side-by-side comparison indicates that the two descriptions are complementary, with the later account in *Judean Antiquities* composed as a supplement to its counterpart in *War*. The two tangentially overlap, but, in general, information supplied in one is not found in the other and vice versa. *Judean Antiquities* 15.410–416 provides intricate details of the Royal Stoa, while *Judean War* 5.190–192 only generically describes the porticoes. The second court is detailed in *Judean War* 5.193–198, and only mentioned in *Judean Antiquities* 15.417. The inner gates (*War* 5.201–205), features of the temple structure (*War* 5.206–227), and the Antonia Tower (*War* 5.238–247) in *Judean War* are much less developed in *Judean Antiquities* 15.391–395 and 418–420; however, *Judean Antiquities* includes particulars about the politics surrounding the high priest's vestments (15.403–409) and specifics about the chronology of the building project (15.421–423, 425), while *Judean War* 5.228–237 emphasizes the priests' external appearance and the physical requirements of the office. Moreover, focusing on a literary comparison seems to mitigate some of the more prominent discrepancies detected by scholars,

and this appears to remain the case even when relevant archaeological data is incorporated; of course, when wider swaths of rabbinic or second temple data are collated and analyzed alongside Josephus, the complexities multiply. But that sort of investigation extends beyond the scope of the present chapter.

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FURTHER READING

The literature on the Temple Mount generally, and Herod's temple more specifically, is vast; however, several secondary sources provide solid overviews of the literary and archaeological issues involved. Two examples include Dan Bahat's article (1999), which juxtaposes a discussion of the literary sources with relevant archaeological data, and the relevant section in Ed P. Sanders's book (1992, 51–69), which focuses on the temple's religious significance within contemporary Judaism. Scholars who situate the Herodian temple among Herod's other building projects include Ehud Netzer (2006, [Chapter 7](#)) and Peter Richardson (1996; 2004). Monographs that delve more deeply into the archaeological data include the recent work by Asher S. Kaufman (2004), which provides dozens of helpful drawings, illustrations, and pictures, and the widely cited works by Benjamin Mazar (1975) and the classic study by Frederick J. Hollis (1934). For a sweeping and extremely detailed overview of the Jerusalem temple, its history and architecture, see Theodor A. Busink's two volumes, the second volume of which contains discussions of Herod's temple (1980). Also extremely useful in this vein is Jan Simons (1952, especially [Chapter 6](#)). More focused studies of the discrepancies between the sources both second temple and rabbinic can be found in Levine's article (1994), and lengthy discussion in his monograph on

Jerusalem (2002, especially [Chapter 6](#)). Also useful is the article by Joshua Schwartz and Yehoshua Peleg (2007), which provides an example of how scholars evaluate the relevant archaeological and literary data, using a variety of tools. Note also the older article by Adolf Büchler (1898), which includes detailed analyses of Josephus vis-à-vis the Mishnah. More accessible resources include Leen Ritmeyer (2006, especially [Chapter 8](#)) and Hershel Shanks (2007), which are filled with pictures, illustrations, and competent summaries of the data.

CHAPTER 16

Josephus and the Jewish Sects

Albert I. Baumgarten

16.1 Introduction

Josephus devoted two excursuses to groups in Second Temple Judea, in *Jewish War* and in *Jewish Antiquities*: these excursuses discuss the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the so-called “Fourth Philosophy.” He also made numerous scattered remarks about these groups and their members, as well as about other individuals or groups, such as John the Baptist, Bannus, and Jesus. (I exclude the Samaritans because their status as a variety of Judaism is questionable.) Josephus claimed to have tried out the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, all within a year. He then spent three years in the desert with Bannus, before returning to the city (Jerusalem) to live as a Pharisee (*Life* 10–12).

One key term Josephus used for these groups was *hairesis*. This was a common word, derived from the verb *haireō*, which in its middle forms meant to “choose,” or to “prefer.” In Hellenistic Greek, *hairesis* often referred to a political faction. Indeed, in his narrative of Second Temple times, some of the groups Josephus called *haireseis* often functioned as political parties. *Hairesis* could also be used for a philosophical school—a group holding distinctive tenets and practicing a way of life. Josephus therefore also called these Jewish groups “philosophies,” noting their distinctive tenets and, in at least one case, the Essenes, including an elaborate description of their way of life. Whether as *haireseis* or as philosophies, Josephus’s non-Jewish reader would have a fairly clear idea of the nature of these Jewish groups from the labels he used (Baumgarten 1998). To further help his Greek reader, Josephus compared the Pharisees to the Stoics (*Life* 12) and the Essenes followed a way of life taught by Pythagoras to the Greeks (*Ant.* 15.371).

Hairesis had one advantage. As *hairesis* was derived from *haireō*, it emphasized that a *hairesis* was a movement of choice—that one elected to join. *Hairesis* stressed the voluntary aspect of the Jewish groups. As the author of the *Hypothetica*, commonly attributed to Philo, wrote concerning the Essenes, “their persuasion is not based on birth, for birth is not a descriptive mark of voluntary associations” (*Hyp.* 11.1–2).

Josephus also used other terms for these groups: *phylon* (tribe) or *tagma* (unit). Greek cities had tribes, nominally based on birth, which were the basis

of aspects of their political organization. When applied to Jewish groups, *phylon* suggested the hereditary nature of their membership, which might be correct for the priestly Jerusalem Sadducees, at the very least. *Tagma* had military overtones and was often a designation for a military unit: the Sadducees were called a *tagma* (*War* 2.164), which may allude to the military nature of Manasseh (the code name for the Sadducees) in 4QpNah. *Tagma* was also a frequent designation for the Essenes (*War* 2.122, 125, 143, 160, 161) whose defecation practices (*War* 2.148–149) over a hole, dug *ad hoc*, in the field, were based on the requirements in Deuteronomy 23:13–14 for an army in camp, in battle. Essenes thus understood themselves as an army, perhaps one already fighting the final battles of the end of days (see [Chapter 11](#) by Roth in this volume).

There has been significant scholarly debate whether the term “sect” is appropriate for these groups, or some term is better for their ancient and non-Christian context (Sanders 1977, 425–426; Talmon 1994; Stern 2011). Therefore, if one chooses to call these groups “sects,” the term must be employed loosely and emptied of some of its usual modern connotations. For example, “sect,” in modern usage, implies an aberrant or deviant group, in explicit dissent from some orthodox or established “church.” That is not what Josephus intended in his discussion of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Essenes. For him, these three “philosophies” were the heart of legitimate Judaism: the “Fourth Philosophy” was an aberrant and deviant accretion. Furthermore, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were close to the seats of power, and sometimes in power. Even when they were not in power, they behaved more like modern political parties (disagreeing with the policy and actions of their rivals, but not seceding from the central institution of their time—sitting together in the same Sanhedrin, Acts 23:6–9). I therefore propose redefining sect so as to be appropriate to Josephus’s *haireseis* or philosophies. One can thus take advantage of his insights and of his keen social vision, without falling into the trap of an overly modern analysis, inappropriate to the ancient world (cf. Broshi 2005/6).

16.2 Questions Concerning Josephus’s Accounts

Trenchant questions have been raised concerning Josephus’s accounts of the Jewish groups. For example, was Josephus believable when he claimed that he spent a year with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes (*Life* 10–12), or was this a *topos*, according to which an intellectual claimed to have learned from all possible sources (Cohen 1979, 106–107)? Specialization was considered the mark of a pedant, not a gentleman (Mason 2003, 18). Was Josephus a Pharisee, as he asserted (*Life* 12), or was this a commitment taken later in life, when it was politically expedient (Mason 1991, 311–355), of

which there are few if any indications in his earlier works or legal positions (Regev and Nakman 5762/2002)? Josephus's loyalty to priestly traditions seems much more important (Mason 1991, 90–97). What were his sources for the two extensive excursuses on the Jewish groups? Who was the audience for which these excursuses were written and how might his source(s) and/or the audience have shaped the presentation of these movements (Bergmeier 1993; Rajak 2002, 219–240; Mason 2008, 87–90)? Since the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, many scholars have identified Josephus's Essenes with the community that produced the sectarian documents found at Qumran. Should we therefore correct Josephus, a less reliable external witness, in the light of the supposedly internal evidence, newly available from the group (Strugnell 1958; Beall 1988)?

At the same time, the notions of sect and sectarianism are problematic in the social sciences. Some scholars have suggested that the terms are so useless and confusing that we would be better off if they were abandoned, while others have vigorously defended the model (Chalcraft 2007; Dawson 2009).

In response, I offer a “rough and ready” definition of a sect, based on examples *not* taken from ancient Judaism but from a number of modern instances (Baumgarten 1997, 5–11). I then analyze some of Josephus's comments on the Jewish groups in light of that definition, showing the light this loose definition throws on Josephus's account. Accordingly, the term sect, as I propose to understand it, can be applied usefully to the ancient Jewish groups as described by Josephus. Furthermore, whatever Josephus's source(s) of information may have been, his account of the ancient Jewish groups is reliable, on the whole (Baumgarten 2007).

16.3 A Sect Redefined

A sect is a voluntary movement of dissent or protest that finds the actions of some fellow members of the group so objectionable that this conclusion has practical social consequences. A sectarian fits the derogatory definition of a “Puritan” offered in seventeenth-century England as someone who loved God with all his soul and hated his neighbor with all his heart.

The principal practical consequence of this dissent is re-drawing the lines between insiders and outsiders, creating a new class of aliens out of fellow members of the group, and translating the patterns that govern relations with “true” outsiders to apply to the new class of aliens. That is, cultures have rules for governing the relationships between insiders and outsiders, which usually concern food (whose cooked food does one eat?); marriage, worship, and commerce. A sect so disapproves of fellow insiders that its members join together voluntarily to apply to those fellow insiders, whom they detest, some

of the ways in which “real” outsiders are treated. That is the meaning of creating a new class of aliens.

This dynamic also helps explain the hostile reaction sects often evoke. The former fellow insiders do not consider themselves inferior to the sectarians and resent being treated as if they were outsiders. They respond with suspicion and criticism, as in the derogatory definition of Puritan. On another level, this hostile reaction is often sought by sects, as it serves to reinforce their identity. They may even provoke the larger society in order to attain this reinforcement. The walls that a sect erects against this new class of aliens may be higher or lower: they need not be the same across any set of examples.

A sect is a greedy institution (Coser 1974), demanding a sacrifice of identity as the price of membership. That sacrifice may be economic (turning one’s assets over to the group), biological (replacing the role of the biological family with the sectarian family; leader in place of parents; fellow members in place of brothers), or sexual (marriage, divorce, and children subject to sectarian approval; celibacy at the extreme), to name three of the most prominent ways that sacrifice may be demanded. Some groups may demand a higher sacrifice, others a lower. In general, there is a correlation between the degree of sacrifice demanded and the height of the walls erected against the new aliens. A lower demand for sacrifice usually accompanies lower walls, while a higher demand for sacrifice goes along with higher walls.

As proposed by Bryan Wilson, those sects that make lower demands and have lower walls are reformist, while those that make high demands and erect higher walls are introversionist. Reformist sects consider the outside world as salvageable, hence their break with it and its institutions is less extreme. The mainstream may err, but it is capable of being taught the truth; it is therefore worthwhile to maintain contact with the central institutions of society. Introversionist sects have given up on the outside world as an irredeemable source of evil, to be guarded against at all costs. Introversionist sects care only about saving themselves (Wilson 1973, 18–26).

16.4 Applying This Definition of Sect

As indicated above, the terms *proairesis*, *hairesis*, and *haireseis* in Josephus and Philo’s *Hypothetica*, combined with the explicit statement in *Hypothetica* 11.2 that being an Essene “is not based on birth, for birth is not a descriptive mark of voluntary associations” all are indications that Josephus and the author of the *Hypothetica* recognized the voluntary character of the groups they discussed.

The central role of creating a new category of outsider in defining a sect was expressed when Josephus explained that Essenes were divided into four

classes according to their duration in the training: “[A]nd the later-joiners are so inferior to the earlier-joiners that if they should touch them, the latter wash themselves off as if they have mingled with a foreigner” (*War* 2.150; trans. Mason, BJP).

Josephus did not discuss one point (perhaps because it might reflect badly on the Essenes, whom he intended to praise): what would an Essene do if touched by an ordinary Jew? It would seem, *a fortiori*, that if a senior Essene took a bath after contact with a junior, as if he had mingled with a foreigner, he would certainly take one after contact with an ordinary Jew. Essenes treated ordinary Jews outside their sect as if they were aliens.

Perhaps this was the reason why Josephus stressed that the Essenes were of Jewish birth (*War* 2.119). Seeing that they treated Jews in the same way as aliens, a non-Jew might conclude that Essenes were not Jews. This may well have been the reason that Pliny wrote that the Essenes were a *gens sola* and a *gens aeterna* (*NH* 5.73). Jews ordinarily treated fellow Jews differently than aliens (e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1). Considering the way Essenes behaved towards other Jews, Josephus needed to remind his reader that—contrary to appearances—the Essenes were Jewish.

One further detail in Josephus’s account of the Essenes fits the same pattern. Participation in the Essene meal was limited to members of the group, retiring to the hall, as if it were a sanctuary (*War* 2.129). Entrance to the Jerusalem temple was forbidden to aliens, and large warning inscriptions in Greek and Latin stood outside the sacred area of Herod’s temple. The principle, applied in the Jerusalem temple against aliens, was transferred by the Essenes as a measure against fellow Jews outside their sect.

Josephus’s Sadducees may also have created a new class of aliens. Much depends on how one understands: “The Sadducees ... in their encounters with their peers are as uncouth as in those with outsiders (*War* 2.166; trans. Mason, BJP).” Just who were these peers (*hoi homoioi*)? There are several possible candidates for those “peers,” including all other Jews. If so, this would be important. The Sadducees were so identified with the temple that one may wonder if they really were a sect. Josephus, however, included them with the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Fourth Philosophy, a sign that he viewed them as part of the same phenomenon as the other groups. If he meant that Sadducees treated other Jews as aliens, then this would confirm his categorization.

Finally, while Luke’s Pharisee exhibited disdain for other Jews (Luke 18:11), we have no direct evidence in Josephus that the Pharisees created a new class of alien. Nevertheless, indirect evidence may be available. Sadok the Pharisee was one of the co-founders of the Fourth Philosophy or Sicarii (*Ant.* 18.4). The members of this group supposedly agreed in all respects with the Pharisees, differing only in political orientation (*Ant.* 18.23). Indeed, the

Fourth Philosophy considered fellow Jews as aliens (*War* 7.154–155). Perhaps this attitude helped justify the attack by the Sicarii on Masada against Ein Gedi on Passover (*War* 4.400–409). If the Fourth Philosophy created a new class of alien, perhaps this was part of their Pharisaic heritage, and the Pharisees too marked boundaries against fellow Jews, as if they were gentiles.

Some indications of the resentment the sects aroused by creating a new class of aliens can be found outside Josephus. For example, John the Baptist expressed his disapproval of the food of other Jews by eating only locusts and honey from the hive (Matt. 3:4). John's choice of foods implied that he considered other Jews as aliens, whose prepared food was forbidden to him. Jews returned the compliment by noting that John's refusal to eat bread and drink wine (major components of the usual basket of foods consumed then) was a sign that he was possessed by a demon (Luke 7:33).

There is abundant evidence that ancient Jewish groups demanded a sacrifice of identity. Essenes were celibate but there were also some married Essenes; however, even those marrying Essenes had no intercourse with their wives during pregnancy (*War* 2.160–162). According to Philo (*Hyp.* 11.14–17) and Pliny the Elder (*NH* 5.73), the Essenes did not marry. Josephus (*War* 2.122), Philo (*Hyp.* 11.14), and Pliny (*NH* 5.73) agreed that Essenes made over their private property to the community. In addition to these sexual and economic sacrifices of identity, Essenes also sacrificed their biological or familial identity. An Essene's "real" brother became his fellow sectarian and not his biological brother. Relations among Essenes were as among brothers, with one fund for all (*War* 2.122). For that reason, an Essene was allowed to help anyone in need as much as necessary, according to his own judgment. Yet, if that Essene wanted to give a gift to his relatives, that is, if an Essene showed remnants of loyalty to his biological family, he needed the permission of the leaders of the group (*War* 2.134). Another aspect of the sacrifice of biological identity concerned Essene practices of defecation. As defecating in the Essene manner violated the Sabbath, defecation was prohibited that day (*War* 2.147), which was a serious sacrifice of biological-bodily identity.

While I designate the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Dead Sea Community, and others as sects, I recognize that the degree of greed or the height of the walls erected against the outside world were not equivalent across all groups. Some were closer to the mainline institutions, others at greater tension. Some were reformist, others introversionist. Even based on a superficial acquaintance with the different ancient Jewish groups, the Pharisees, who took care to legislate *for the people* and were not only concerned with themselves (*Ant.* 13.296), and who ate together with the king (*Ant.* 13.289), were in the reformist category. This concurs with the testimony of the Jewish source quoted by the Church Father Hippolytus in the second century C.E. (Baumgarten 1984, 8–17; Mason 2008, 88–89). In a marked departure from the denunciations of the Pharisees common among Patristic

authors, this Jewish source noted that Pharisees observed purity laws moderately (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.28.3, *epieikōs*; an important term that Josephus applied to the Pharisaic philosophy of punishment in *Ant.* 13.294). The Sadducees, who supposedly sat on the same Sanhedrin as the Pharisees (Acts 23:6–9), were also reformist. The Essenes and Qumran approached the extreme introversionist end of the spectrum.

16.5 The Pharisees

The Pharisees appear in numerous places in Josephus's works, from his first to the last, from the *Jewish War* to his *Life*: first, along with the Sadducees and the Essenes, as part of a general background to events, but with no specific connection to a particular event, as one of the three principal *haireseis* among Jews, at the time of the Hasmonean ruler Jonathan (152–142 B.C.E.; *Ant.* 13.171–173). This may be Josephus's birth certificate of the group. They then reappear regularly, as a group or as individuals: in the account of the break between John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.E.) and the Pharisees (*Ant.* 13.288–298); in a sordid tale of their activities in the court of Herod (37–4 B.C.E.; *Ant.* 17.41–45); in many places in the story of the Great Revolt, including *Life* 191–270; and, finally, in Josephus's narrative of his search for the best way to live as a Jew (*Life* 10–12).

Concerning the size of the group, we have little information other than Josephus's comment that six thousand Pharisees refused to take an oath of loyalty to Caesar and Herod (*Ant.* 17.42). It is impossible to know whether this was the total size of the movement at the time. Josephus's comment that he chose to live as a Pharisee when he returned to Jerusalem, noted above, combined with his statements that the Pharisees were especially influential among the townsfolk (*Ant.* 18.15) and that the Essenes settled in every town (*War* 2.124), suggests that he saw the Jewish sects as a whole as urban movements, with a special concentration in Jerusalem.

Josephus made programmatic statements about the Pharisees (*War* 2.162–164; *Ant.* 13.171–173; 13.297–298; 18.12–15). Of all these, Josephus considered his principal account of the Jewish groups to be that in *War* 2.119–166 and he often referred back to it in subsequent discussions (*Ant.* 13.173; 13.298; 18.11). I therefore begin with *Jewish War* 2.162–164.

First, according to *Jewish War* 2.162, the Pharisees constituted the first school (*prōte&c.macr;n ... hairesin*), whatever “first” may mean in that context. Josephus made similar comments in *Jewish Antiquities* 13.296 and 298, noting further that the Pharisees enjoyed the support of the masses. He indicated their influential position in religious life of the Jews (*Ant.* 18.15 and 17; Mason 1991, 129–131; Sanders 1992, 380–451, 458–490; Deines 2001

and 2010). Furthermore, the Pharisees were reputed to interpret legal matters with precision (*met' akribeias dokountes ekseigesthai ta nomima*, War 2.162), a statement repeated with three of the same words in *Life* 191: the Pharisees had a reputation of excelling others in their precision with respect to the traditional legal matters (*hoi peri ta patria nomima dokousin tōn allōn akribieiai diapherein*). This same claim appeared in *Jewish Antiquities* 17.41, albeit with an explicit derogatory slant: the Pharisees were a group priding themselves on their exact adherence to ancestral custom, who claimed (pretended?) to know the laws of which God approved (*ep' eksakribōsei mega phronoun tou patriou kai nomōn hois xairei to theion prospoioumenon*).

In another programmatic passage, after narrating the account of the break between Hyrcanus and the Pharisees, Josephus stressed the Pharisaic commitment to their tradition or *paradosis*, which was not written in the laws of Moses. He noted that the Sadducees, who observed only the written laws, contested this Pharisaic tradition, and that, as a consequence of the break with the Pharisees, Hyrcanus abrogated the regulations (*nomima*) established by the Pharisees for the people and punished those who observed them. These regulations were restored by Salome Alexandra (*Ant.* 13.408). The Pharisaic tradition thus consisted of explicit ways of fulfilling the biblical commandments with practices not written in the Bible (Mason 1991, 231–245). This paradox was therefore subject to attack, not only by the Sadducees, but also by other opponents, as a human invention and not the divine word (4QpNah; Mark 7). Unfortunately, although Josephus claimed to have been a Pharisee, he gave no information about the special laws Pharisees observed (for Josephus on sectarian halakha, see [Chapter 18](#) by Nakman in this volume).

Josephus stressed Pharisaic beliefs, contrasting their beliefs to those of other Jewish groups. They believed in fate, but also that humans had the choice to act rightly or not, with fate assisting in every action (*War* 2.163; *Ant.* 13.172; 18.13). Josephus explained that, according to the Pharisees, everything was brought about by fate, but that human will could still pursue certain things left in human hands, since God desired that this choice be left to mankind. On another key issue, the Pharisees believed that souls were imperishable, with the soul of a good person enjoying reincarnation, while the souls of the wicked suffered eternal retribution (*War* 2.163). He repeated much the same thing in *Jewish Antiquities* 18.14, adding that as a result of these views concerning fate, the immortality of the soul, and the possibility of reincarnation, the Pharisees were extremely influential among the townsfolk (*tois te de&c.macr;mois*).

In Josephus's narrative of the history of the Jews, from the Hasmonean era to his own times, the Pharisees were often deeply enmeshed in the politics of the times. He did not hesitate to repeat their sordid actions in Herod's court (*Ant.*

17.41–45), nor the schemes and bribes of John of Gischala, together with the Pharisee, Simon, son of Gamaliel, who intended to have Josephus deposed as governor of the Galilee (*Life* 189–270). Nevertheless, in his account of the group in *War* 2.166, he insisted that the Pharisees promoted harmony within the community (Mason 1991, 170–173; Mason 2008, 135; Deines 2010).

In sum, there are gaps in Josephus's account of the Pharisees. Morton Smith detected a major gap between the attitude towards the Pharisees in *Jewish War* and that in later works. He explained this gap as a response to the rise of a Pharisaic family at Yavneh after the destruction of the temple (Smith 1996, 1.104–115). However, Smith's analysis has been challenged in detailed studies by Daniel Schwartz and Steve Mason (Schwartz 1983; Mason 1991, 193–195). As an alternative, Mason proposed that Josephus was consistently hostile to the Pharisees (Mason 1991, 372–375). However, this suggestion runs foul of the highly favorable things Josephus said about Simon, son of Gamaliel, in *Life* 192, which I find hard to understand in any other way (cf. Mason 2001, 98–99), despite the fact that Josephus was narrating events that took place in the Galilee, during the revolt, decades earlier than when he wrote *Life*, and at a time, “then,” when Simon was allied with John of Gischala and involved in treacherous dealings to depose Josephus. Simon was a Pharisee, from Jerusalem, of brilliant ancestry, and a man “full of insight and reason, able to rectify matters that were sitting badly by virtue of his own practical wisdom.” Perhaps the best conclusion is to view Josephus's inconsistency concerning the Pharisees as one more example of his lack of consistency in other matters (Cohen 1979, 47).

16.6 The Sadducees

Josephus had less to say about the Sadducees, for whom he had little sympathy (Mason 1991, 170), with much of that offered in contrast to the Pharisees. The Sadducees did away with fate entirely, putting all human actions in the hands of free will (*War* 2.165; *Ant.* 13.173). They denied the persistence of the soul after death or post-mortem rewards and punishments (*War* 2.165, repeated in *Ant.* 18.16) with the remark that the soul perishes along with the body. They did not accept the Pharisaic *paradosis*: they observed only those laws written in the Torah (*Ant.* 13.297; 18.16), concerning which they had controversy and serious differences with the Pharisees (*Ant.* 13.298). This left open the question of just how the Sadducees coped with the difficulties, obscurities, and gaps in the Torah (Lauterbach 1951, 151–59; Regev 2005; Shemesh 2009). They were stricter in punishment than the Pharisees (*Ant.* 13.294). Even though they were of the highest social standing, they were a small group that accomplished practically nothing, for the Pharisees had the support of the masses, while the Sadducees relied on the

wealthy (*Ant.* 13.298), so that even when the Sadducees did occupy some office, they were obliged to follow the prescriptions of the Pharisees (*Ant.* 18.17).

The Sadducees were a contentious, disharmonious group (*War* 2.166; Goodman 2008). Like the Pharisees, the Sadducees were heavily involved in Josephus's narrative of Jewish political and religious life from the Hasmonean era up to and including the period of the Great Revolt. According to the conventional scholarly wisdom, with the destruction of the temple and the razing of Jerusalem, the Sadducees lost their base of power and therefore had no impact on Jewish life after 70 C.E. (Goodman 2007, 153–162).

16.7 The Essenes

As much of [Section 16.4](#) dealt with the Essenes, the remarks here will be brief. First, the Essenes were the object of the longest description of any group in Josephus's writings (*War* 2.119–161). They were also the first group presented in the excursus in *War* 2, which Josephus considered his primary account of the Jewish philosophies. The account in *Jewish War* 2.119–161 might give the reader the impression that the Essenes were the most important Jewish group of the time, or, at least, the one he favored, despite Josephus's frequent remarks about the primary place of the Pharisees.

According to *Jewish Antiquities* 18.20, and confirmed by Philo (*Prob.* 75), there were four thousand Essenes. Perhaps they were having trouble keeping up their numbers and that is why they adopted children to raise as members of their group (*War* 2.120). They settled in every town (*War* 2.124 and Philo, *Hyp.* 11.1), although Philo claimed that they avoided the cities (*Prob.* 76) while Pliny the Elder wrote of an Essene city on the west side of the Dead Sea, away from the coast and above Ein Gedi (*NH* 5.73).

Josephus's accounts in *Jewish War* 2.119–161 and *Jewish Antiquities* 18.18–22 are also notable for being the only ones that contained extensive details concerning the Essene way of life: Josephus did not limit his remarks to the beliefs of the Essenes, their conviction that everything was in the hands of fate, the immortality of the soul and post-mortem rewards and punishments (*War* 2.153–158 and *Ant.* 18.18).

The Essene attitude toward the temple (*Ant.* 18.19) is worthy of attention. They sent votive offerings to the temple, that is, perhaps they paid the temple tax, but were barred from the temple because they performed their own rituals of purification, disagreeing with the way the rites of purification (red heifers?) were practiced there. Even if the Essene rites of purification were more stringent than the manner in which these rites were performed in the temple, the temple authorities were unwilling to accept this challenge to their

legitimacy and barred Essenes from the temple, as impure (Baumgarten 1994).

According to *Jewish War* 2.159, Essenes foretold the future. This was due to their study of scripture and/or their various forms of purification. This suggests that Essenes were able to find in the prophets predictions of events of their time (perhaps the End of Days), or as a result of their purifications they came into direct contact with the heavenly powers who could tell them what would happen (compare Josephus's account of Hyrcanus's prophecy, *Ant.* 13.300). Josephus noted that Essenes rarely erred concerning the future and provided examples of their successes, as in *Jewish Antiquities* 15.373–379.

16.8 The “Fourth Philosophy” and the Zealots

The members of this group were urban guerillas, known as *sicarii*, after the short dagger or *sica*, their preferred concealed weapon (*Ant.* 20.186). For Josephus, the “fourth philosophy” was entirely illegitimate, having nothing to do with the others (*War* 2.118). It was a novelty, hitherto unknown (*Ant.* 18.9), and it bore significant responsibility for the disaster of the Great Revolt (*Ant.* 18.25), as its leader Eleazar ben Yair admitted in the speech Josephus put into his mouth at Masada (*War* 7.330 and 332; Cohen 2010, 133–153). Founded by Judah the Galilean (from Gamla, in the Golan) and Sadok the Pharisee (*Ant.* 18.4), it was a radically anti-Roman offshoot of the Pharisees, but was not the same as the Zealots, even if these two groups had similar anti-Roman tendencies (Smith 1996, 1. 211–226; Stern 1973).

The Zealots were an urban Jerusalem movement, comprising members of the lower priesthood and of refugees who had fled to Jerusalem from Judea. Unlike the “fourth philosophy,” which was born at the time of imposition of direct Roman rule in 6 C.E., the Zealots arose on the stage of history during the Great Revolt and took an active part in it (Oppenheimer 2000).

16.9 Bannus

Bannus is only known from Josephus, who spent three years with him in the wilderness (*Life* 11). Perhaps Josephus was his only disciple; we do not know. Bannus wore clothing that came from trees as a sign of self-sufficiency, like that of the exotic Indians or Scythians described by Herodotus (Mason 2001, 19). Bannus's diet is another example of a sectarian treating other Jews as a new class of aliens, applying to fellow Jews the prohibition of eating “foreign” food, while restricting himself to food taken directly from nature, not “imprinted” with a problematic social order.

16.10 John the Baptist

Josephus's John (*Ant.* 18.116–119) attracted crowds and was ultimately executed because Herod Antipas feared that John might supplant him as leader of the people. John, according to Josephus, encouraged the Jews to lead righteous lives: his baptism was not intended as a means of purification, or to gain pardon. Right behavior was a necessary preliminary. Baptism found its place afterwards, as a consecration of the body, “implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior.” Perhaps John's baptism was a sign of readiness to enter the kingdom of heaven (Taylor 1997).

16.11 Jesus

The *Testimonium Flavianum* (*Ant.* 18.63–64) has been the subject of extensive scholarly discussion. The text as it now stands was touched by the hands of interpolators, some time between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, while the question of what Josephus originally wrote, if anything, remains widely debated (on the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume; Meier 1990; Feldman 2012).

16.12 Josephus and Other Ancient Jewish Sources

There is additional ancient Jewish evidence concerning virtually all the sects discussed above. A main focus of scholarly activity has been the question of how to integrate what we know from Josephus with knowledge from other sources. Against the difficulties raised by the skeptics, such as Martin Goodman (Goodman 2007, 33–46), Jonathan Klawans has recently argued for the coherence of what Josephus wrote with what we learn elsewhere (Klawans 2012). The Qumran finds have evoked lively contributions concerning what we might learn from the Qumran sources to enhance our knowledge of Pharisaic law and that of the Sadducees, to fill in Josephus's omissions on those topics (Regev 2005; Shemesh 2009). The identification of the Qumran group, in some manner or other, with Josephus's Essenes has been a subject of debate (Baumgarten 2004; Mason 2008, 84–96; Atkinson and Magness 2010; García Martínez 2011).

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FURTHER READING

The excursus on the Jewish groups in *Jewish War* 2.119–164, as translated and commented on in Mason (2008), is the place to begin. Mason (2001) contains an important treatment of the Pharisees passages in Josephus's *Life*, along with an analysis of the account of Josephus's search for the best way to live as a Jew, which included his year with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, his three years with Bannus, and then concluded with Josephus's decision to return to the city and live as a Pharisee. Dawson (2009) is a thorough discussion of the difficulties associated with sect and sectarianism in the social sciences. Klawans (2012) offers a vigorous defense of the ways Josephus's comments on the sects cohere with what we know from other sources from Second Temple Judaism, stressing the fact that Josephus was correct to emphasize differences in belief, because belief mattered at the time more than we have become accustomed to think (compare Shemesh 2009). Two substantial works on the Pharisees are Mason (1991) and Sanders (1992). Mason (1991) is an exhaustive analysis of all the places where Josephus discussed the Pharisees, with extensive comments on key terms and the ways they appear in all of Josephus's works. Mason elaborates there his proposal that Josephus was uniformly hostile to the Pharisees. Sanders (1992) specifies what Josephus meant by calling the Pharisees the "first school" and being influential in Jewish religious life. He takes issue with previous generations of scholars who concluded that the Pharisees ran Jewish life; instead, he argues that they were no more than influential. Sanders was challenged by Deines (2001). Mason (2008, 84–96) takes up the crucial aspects of information about the Essenes. Two sides of the debate concerning the Qumran-Essene connection are Atkinson and Magness (2010) and Baumgarten (2004), with Atkinson and Magness supporting that connection and Baumgarten challenging it. The most recent study in the long line of works on the *Testimonium Flavianum* is Feldman (2012) (see also [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). A fundamental analysis of the historical circumstances that led to the rise of ancient Jewish sectarianism can be found in Baumgarten (1997).

CHAPTER 17

Josephus and the Priesthood

James S. McLaren

17.1 Introduction

Much of the scholarship about Jewish customs, beliefs, and practices in the late Second Temple period tends to center around the role played by the four sects (on these “sects,” see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). In part, Josephus has inspired this focus with his various descriptions of the sects and the respective public standing he assigned to each of them (*Ant.* 18.15, 17). It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that the information provided by Josephus regarding another group within the Jewish community, the priesthood, has attracted only limited attention. In fact, when considering the whole corpus of Josephus’s extant writings it is evident that the priesthood, and in particular the high priesthood, is significant and one that he was concerned to present in a favorable light (Gussman 2008; contra Schwartz 1990, 91–108). This subject is of major importance because Josephus himself was a priest, and not only did this form the basis for his identity as a public figure and writer, but also it further shaped his understanding of events during his lifetime (Thoma 1989, 196).

The following discussion will point out the key ways in which Josephus portrays the role of the priesthood. It will be divided into five sections: Josephus as a priest; the priesthood in Josephus’s narratives; the priesthood and the Revolt; the excursuses on the high priesthood; and the depiction of the priesthood in *Jewish Antiquities* 20.

17.2 Josephus as Priest

In all four extant works, Josephus proudly asserts his status as a priest. There is no embarrassment or concern that being identified as a priest would be a source of criticism or ridicule. Rather, Josephus actively claims that he is a priest and uses it to defend the integrity of his narratives. It is particularly notable that he expresses this enthusiasm after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. when many of its precious objects were on display in Rome in the new, grand Temple of Peace constructed by Vespasian.

When introducing himself to his audience in *Jewish War*, Josephus identifies

himself as the son of Matthias, a Jew, a resident of Jerusalem, a priest, and a participant in the war (*War* 1.3). Given his comment about the failings of existing accounts of the war, Josephus considered this background as the credentials that made his account a worthy one. Josephus's status as priest would have placed him in a position of authority for his audience. For example, at Jotapata, his ability to interpret dreams was validated by his priestly descent (*War* 3.352) and his knowledge of sacred scriptures (see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). His decision to submit to the Romans took place in the context of his priestly ability to engage in divinely inspired prophecy (*War* 3.392).

Since it was the case that, in Roman society, priests were accorded respect, Josephus may have appealed to his priestly background as a way of bolstering his credentials and the credibility of his narratives for his non-Jewish readers. Josephus continued to expand on the importance of his status as a priest in his later writings, which indicates that he viewed it as a means of engaging his entire audience. In the preface to *Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.* 1.1–26), Josephus does not concern himself with the issue of his credentials but rather explains the reasons for his writing the work. At the very end of *Jewish Antiquities*, he explains that he will provide his audience with information about himself (*Ant.* 20.266), which he does in the appended section we know as his *Life* (see [Chapter 3](#) by Mason on *Life* in this volume).

In *Life*, Josephus provides substantial detail about his priestly status and notes that he is descended from the Hasmoneans, thereby also giving him a royal lineage (*Life* 2). However, what is most important for Josephus is his identity as a priest. It is the first thing he mentions (*Life* 1): he explains to his audience that being a priest is highly respected in Jewish culture. Josephus further explains that he belongs to the *most* important family of priests (*Life* 2). What makes this self-identification so significant is that he may have used this status when justifying his actions, especially in light of the accusations that may have been made by Justus of Tiberias (*Life* 336–339; see Drexler 1925, 293–312; cf. Mason 2001, xli–l). Josephus also makes passing reference to his priesthood in the context of presenting a positive depiction of his behavior (e.g., *Life* 80).

Josephus's enthusiasm to use the priesthood as a means of defending himself and his writings is also evident in *Against Apion*. He makes reference to his priestly status to explain his qualification for translating the sacred scriptures in *Jewish Antiquities* (*Apion* 1.54). Indeed, the extent to which his identity as a priest was of genuine concern to Josephus is made clear by the way he addresses the issue of his marriages, since one of these had been to a captive which was forbidden in Jewish law (*Ant.* 3.276; *Apion* 1.35; *Life* 414–415; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). He offers a series of justifications in order to explain these irregularities and so preserve his priestly purity.

There are three further aspects of Josephus's self-presentation as a priest that

warrant brief comment. One is the lineage by which Josephus inherited his priesthood. Josephus explains that he is a priest through the link to the Hasmoneans (*Ant.* 16.187). In recounting his ancestry in *Life*, Josephus claims that his link to the Hasmoneans was derived through the maternal line rather than the paternal line (*Life* 2). The crucial issue is the meaning of “mother” in the passage. While some have seen this as a reason to doubt Josephus’s claim (Cohen 1979, 107–108 n. 33), others have effectively argued that Josephus was referring to a more distant ancestor and that the subsequent male descendants had long since become priests (Rajak 1983, 15–16; Mason 2001, 5 n. 13; 6 nn. 14–15). Second, Josephus regarded prophecy and the ability to interpret dreams accurately as gifts associated with the priesthood. As well as assigning such gifts to himself (*War* 3.351–354), he also extols John Hyrcanus I for possessing those gifts (*War* 1.67–69; *Ant.* 13.300; see Feldman 1990, 419–421). Another aspect we should consider is Josephus’s use of the Bible. If we accept that he was a priest, there are some noticeable variations between *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* regarding the way Josephus refers to biblical stories and regarding the type of biblical stories he cites. Seth Schwartz has proposed that Josephus’s knowledge of the Bible was primarily limited to parts of the Pentateuch when he wrote *Jewish War* (Schwartz 1990, 24–35). Although the number of direct references or allusions to material outside of the Pentateuch is relatively small in *Jewish War*, there are enough to indicate that Josephus did have a good knowledge of the biblical narrative from the outset of his writing career. The variation between texts in the presentation of biblical stories is best explained by consideration of the differing agendas and genres rather than a possible change of allegiance (Feldman 2001, 315–323).

The final observation to make in relation to the importance Josephus placed on being a priest is how it influenced his outlook on human affairs. For Josephus, God was the sole authority and power and oversaw all that took place (*War* 7.451–453; *Ant.* 1.14–16, 10.142). This worldview is expressed most clearly in the way Josephus explains the outcome of the war and the destruction of the temple. It was God who had decided the Romans would be victorious and the temple would be destroyed (e.g., *War* 2.539, 4.323, 5.412–414, 6.252–253; *Ant.* 20.166; see Price 2007, 188–191). In the remaining sections of this chapter, it will be shown how Josephus’s identity as a priest also helped shape his depiction of the Jewish priesthood.

17.3 The Priesthood in Josephus’s Narratives

Josephus profiles the priesthood in a prominent manner that is appropriate to the purpose of each work. His interest is expressed through references to the temple, its priests (including high priests), and the cult. The following

comments highlight how the priesthood is prominent in the structure of Josephus's works and/or in the subject matter of each work.

The temple plays a key role in the structure in *Jewish War* and Josephus flags that his account of the destruction of the temple will take center-stage (*War* 1.25–28). His interest in the temple is then clearly evident throughout the text and even acts as bookends for the entire story. The narrative commences with the assault on the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Judas quickly restoring the temple to its rightful activity (*War* 1.34–35, 38–40). The penultimate Roman action described in *Jewish War* is the decision of Vespasian to close the temple at Leontopolis (*War* 7.420–421, 433–435). Many of the incidents described in the brief history leading up to the Revolt also revolve around the temple: Pompey capturing the temple (*War* 1.148–154); the golden eagle incident (*War* 1.648–655); Sabinus's attempt to occupy the temple (*War* 2.45–54); the aqueduct constructed by Pilate (*War* 2.175–177); the statue of Gaius incident (*War* 2.184–203); two events during the governorship of Cumanus: the trouble at Passover (*War* 2.223–227), and the murder of a pilgrim en route to a festival (*War* 2.232–246); Florus's attempt to seize funds (*War* 2.293–295); the priests' decision to stop offering sacrifices (*War* 2.409–210); and the detailed description of the temple (*War* 5.184–237), which becomes the focus of the siege narrative in *Jewish War* Books 5 and 6.

Josephus's interest in the priesthood is also evident in the *Jewish Antiquities*. In the retelling of the biblical narrative in Books 1–10, there are numerous embellishments that promote the role of priests (Rappaport 1930; cf. Attridge 1976, 176–177 n. 1). The centrality of the priesthood is clear as Josephus has Moses himself declare that the best constitution (*politeia*) is God's rule through the priests in an aristocracy (*aristokratia*; *Ant.* 4.223–224). An interesting aspect of the attention paid to the priesthood is that it is often done at the expense of the role assigned to Levites in the biblical tradition (*Ant.* 4.304). Special attention is given to the high priesthood and the importance of Aaron as the divinely chosen office bearer (*Ant.* 3.190, 192; 4.66). When describing the punishment of priests, the descendants of Aaron were not harmed (*Ant.* 10.65), while Korah and his associates were completely destroyed by fire (*Ant.* 3.209, cf. 4.56). Josephus describes the allegorical significance of the vestments worn by the high priest (*Ant.* 3.159–187, esp. 180–187) and embellishes his account of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (*Ant.* 8.111–117).

In the narrative of the post-biblical period, Josephus maintains the importance of the priesthood. Two key examples are the story of Alexander the Great's visit to Jerusalem (*Ant.* 11.317–345) and the paraphrase of the story about the translation of the Bible into Greek (*Ant.* 12.11–118). Also, in the section of *Jewish Antiquities* that parallels *Jewish War* regarding events leading up to the war, Josephus relates a number of additional episodes that reiterate his

ongoing interest in the priesthood, such as incidents relating to control of the high priest's vestments (*Ant.* 18.90–95; 20.6–9), a dispute regarding the height of the temple wall (*Ant.* 20.189–196), and a petition by Levites to wear certain attire in the temple (*Ant.* 20.216–218).

Josephus continues to affirm his standing as a priest in the *Life* and he refers to other priests in the course of the narrative as well. Indeed, Josephus creates the impression that much of his public career that is featured in the work took place in the company of fellow priests. Josephus takes up his responsibility as a public figure with his trip to Rome before the war in order to help secure the release of two priests (*Life* 13). Before his departure from Jerusalem in 66 C.E., he claims to have conferred with chief priests (*Life* 21). At the outbreak of the war, the colleagues who accompany him to Galilee were also priests (*Life* 29) while some of those later sent to replace him were priests as well (*Life* 198).

The importance of the priesthood is also clearly demonstrated in his description of the ideal Jewish constitution in Book 2 of *Against Apion* (*Apion* 2.151–189; see [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay in this volume). Responding to the criticism leveled by Apollonius Molon, Josephus states that he will now provide an outline of the constitution (*Apion* 2.154). At the heart of this system is the God of the Jews, the only sovereign power (*Apion* 2.165–168, 185); with God as the “governor” (*Apion* 2.185), the high priest oversees the priests, the group that is responsible for human affairs (*Apion* 2.185; see Rajak 2002, 208–210; Cancik 1987, 67–74; Barclay 2007, 262 n. 638). The priests are responsible for divine worship, the supervision of the laws and the conduct of trials (*Apion* 2.193–194). For Josephus, this is a divinely sanctioned system of rule that he calls a “theocracy” (*theokratia*, *Apion* 2.165).

17.4 The Priesthood during the Revolt in *Jewish War*

Josephus is particularly careful in the way he presents the role played by priests in relation to the war. With one exception (see below), at no stage does he declare that priests actively supported the war, let alone that they were culpable as advocates of the war cause. Instead, he shows priests among those who actively oppose the decision to go to war. Any involvement in the actual war is explained as a commitment to caring for the well-being of the community once the war has commenced. Whether this depiction of reluctant involvement is accurate is a matter of ongoing debate. Those scholars who favor accepting Josephus's account generally understand that the priests and other aristocratic members of the community had the most to lose from the

war and they also clearly knew that the cause was doomed from the outset (see Rajak 1983, 127–132; Mason 2003, 41–44). Those who regard at least some of the priests as actively involved in starting and fostering the war base their interpretation on the persistent references to various priests and some glosses about the identity of certain participants (see Drexler 1925; Goodman 1987, 200–207). It is important here to outline what Josephus has to say about the role played by priests in relation to the war.

In Josephus's descriptions of the period prior to the war, there is little mention of priests. At no stage in the *Jewish War* narrative do priests feature as causing trouble or trying to agitate for war, while in *Jewish Antiquities* 20, there are at least three incidents in which some priests contribute to the instability in Judea (for discussion of these passages, see below). However, on all occasions of significant trouble, especially when the Roman authorities are involved, priests are not present as agitators.

The situation changes quite dramatically in the account of the outbreak of the war. Josephus has a group he names as “chief priests” (*archiereis*) working in collaboration with other prominent Jews in order to prevent war; note that the plural of high priest used here and elsewhere by Josephus is most likely a reference to the family members of people who had served as high priest (see Sanders 1992, 327–332). They persuade the people of Jerusalem to welcome Florus (*War* 2.316, 320–324), they try to convince Florus to show respect to the Jews (*War* 2.301), and then once the decision to stop offering sacrifices for the well-being of Rome and the emperor was taken, they try to have it reversed (*War* 4.411, 417). Finally, in an attempt to keep control of the city, they take up arms against those in favor of war (*War* 2.422, 428). In the context of this fighting, Josephus finally offers the names of some of these chief priests, Ananias and his brother Ezekias (*War* 2.429). These men are eventually captured by some of the insurgents and are murdered (*War* 2.441).

Josephus depicts priests in two other ways at the outset of the war, yet the information downplays a direct link between the war and the named priests. With the decision to stop offering sacrifices for the well-being of Rome and the emperor, Josephus identifies Eleazar, son of Ananias, as the main protagonist in this decision (*War* 2.409). Eleazar remains active throughout the ensuing conflict (*War* 2.424, 443) and his associates are evidently priests, although Josephus does not identify them as such (*War* 2.409, 417). The other occasion is the appointment of the commanders in the war. Josephus positions this decision as taking place after the defeat of Cestius (*War* 2.562–568). Whatever the precise timing of these appointments, it is clear that priests were very prominent among their number (*War* 2.563, 566). Although not identified here as a priest, Josephus was in this group. Josephus claims in his later work that he had two companions for the command of Galilee, both of whom were priests (*Life* 29).

Priests, and issues relating to the priesthood, are also prominent in various

stages of the account of the war. Among the deputation sent from Jerusalem to replace Josephus were priests (*Life* 198). The priest Ananus oversees the preparation of Jerusalem for war (*War* 2.647–651) and the maintenance of order (*War* 2.652–653), and he remained in charge of affairs in Jerusalem until he and his colleague, Jesus, are murdered by rivals for control of the city in 68 C.E. (*War* 4.314–316). Josephus depicts the loss of Ananus as a disaster for the Jews; it is important to note that the adulation given to Ananus in the eulogy (*War* 4.318–325) is meant to increase the guilt of his murderers for causing the defeat of the Jews. It also serves to shift any direct responsibility for the events of 70 C.E. away from Ananus and those who worked with him early on in the war.

Another issue relevant to the role of the priesthood during the war is the appointment of the high priest, which most likely caused the dispute in Jerusalem that ended with the murder of Ananus, Jesus, and their associates. The rebels' decision to appoint the high priest by lot (*War* 4.153–154) is depicted as a grotesque distortion of established custom that was designed to mock the office (*War* 4.157). According to Josephus, the appointee, Phanni, lacked intelligence and was not from one of the recognized clans (*War* 4.155). The disgust expressed by Josephus reveals the level of esteem that he had for the office of high priest. However, what is most important to note about the whole incident is that this supposedly radical action did not involve the dismantling of the office but a change in how the office holder was appointed.

After the death of Ananus and Jesus, priests in Jerusalem continued to participate in the war. For example, priests are present during the account of the final stages of the capture of the temple. The cult continued to function until late in the siege (*War* 6.94); apparently some priests were killed and others imprisoned (*War* 5.527–533), while others supposedly managed to escape from Jerusalem during the siege (*War* 6.113–116). Many of the priests also appear to have been in Jerusalem as active combatants. Caught up in the fire that engulfed the temple, some priests attacked the Romans with improvised weapons (*War* 6.278); some then decided to jump into the fire rather than resist any longer (*War* 6.279–280). Later, priests begged for their lives only to be executed by order of Titus (*War* 6.318–322), while others survived by surrendering precious objects from the temple (*War* 6.387–391). Josephus blames radical tyrants and their associates for the disaster of 70 C.E., with unnamed revolutionaries and insurgents largely responsible for instigating the war. However, the one group of Jews consistently identified as participating throughout the entire conflict is priests. While some priests openly opposed the war at the outset, others willingly participated right to the end.

17.5 The Excursuses on the Priesthood

The importance Josephus attached to the priesthood is further evident from the two excursuses he provides on the office of high priest at key points in *Jewish Antiquities*. One excursus is placed at the point in the narrative in Book 10 when the Babylonians capture Jerusalem; the other excursus is provided at the conclusion of Book 20, where Josephus draws an end to the narrative on the eve of the war in 66 C.E. Although quite different in the way they are constructed, these excursuses show that the high priesthood was central to Josephus's understanding of the history of his people. Josephus sets out the narrative of *Jewish Antiquities* in a sequential manner, dealing with events as they occurred under both Jewish and foreign rulers (on *Jewish Antiquities*, see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz in this volume), but these two excursuses draw attention to those who held the high priesthood.

The first excursus is little more than a simple list. With the account of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the storyline has reached an appropriate junction at which to provide a summary. First, a list of the number of kings is provided (*Ant.* 10.143), and then Josephus focuses on the fate of the temple and of those who were connected with it (*Ant.* 10.149–150). The names of all those who held the office of high priest during the time of the first temple is then provided (*Ant.* 10.151–153). Although Josephus does not give any commentary about the high priests, he does explain that the list is warranted because the names of the kings had already been provided in the course of the narrative.

The second excursus in *Jewish Antiquities* 20 is an extensive, annotated list of the number of high priests. It is placed just before the reference to Florus and the start of the war and immediately after Josephus describes the last change in the office of high priest before the war of 66 C.E. (*Ant.* 20.223). Josephus provides a brief history of the high priesthood, noting the origin of the office with Aaron, the eligibility criteria and the total number of high priests (*Ant.* 20.226–227). The list is divided into three parts. First, Josephus provides a brief summary of the period from Moses to the building of the first temple by Solomon, noting the number of high priests, the different systems of governance, and the expected tenure of those who held the office (*Ant.* 20.228–230). The second part of the list falls into two subsections. One lists the number of high priests during the period of the first temple; in contrast to the seventeen listed in Book 10, here Josephus states there were eighteen high priests (see VanderKam 2004, 152). The other subsection lists the high priests from the restoration of the temple to the reign of Antiochus V Eupator (*Ant.* 20.233–234; cf. *Ant.* 12.237–241). The third part covers the period from Antiochus to 66 C.E.; here Josephus provides a lot of detail, mixing the summary of office holder with comments about the governance of the Jewish people.

In this final part of the summary, a number of issues should be noted. Josephus highlights the consequences of those occasions when changes were made regarding the incumbent (*Ant.* 20.236, 238, 247), who sometimes also served as leader (*Ant.* 20.236–249). Herod the Great (see [Chapter 14](#) by van Henten in this volume) did not appoint priests from the correct lineage (*Ant.* 20.247, cf. 15.22), and he is criticized for his abuse of, and disrespect for, the office. Overall, Josephus varies the amount of detail he provides about the high priests, naming many of them from the Hasmonean period (see [Chapter 13](#) by Gruen in this volume), while simply listing the number of incumbents from the time of Herod to the capture of the temple by Titus (*Ant.* 20.250–251).

The inclusion of these summaries at key moments in the narrative of *Jewish Antiquities* indicates that Josephus viewed the office as an important indicator of both continuity and antiquity. Indeed, this high regard for the office is evident when Josephus describes the appointment of the first high priest, Aaron. Josephus expands the biblical account, explaining why God declared that the position was required (*Ant.* 3.189), why Aaron was chosen to be the first high priest (*Ant.* 3.188, 190, 192), and how the appointment was welcomed and acclaimed by all (*Ant.* 3.192). Writing after the destruction of the Second Temple, Josephus was concerned to ensure that his audience regarded the position of high priest as fundamental to the well-being of the Jewish community from its origins to the present and even into the future.

17.6 The Priesthood on the Eve of the Revolt in *Jewish Antiquities* 20

While the preceding discussion highlights the various ways that Josephus promotes the role and importance of priests, especially high priests, within a generally positive account, there are four incidents narrated in *Jewish Antiquities* 20 that appear to offer a counterview: a dispute among the priests over tithes (*Ant.* 20.179–181), the behavior of Ananus as high priest (*Ant.* 20.197–203), the influence of Ananias and a further dispute regarding tithes (*Ant.* 20.204–207), and the kidnapping of Eleazar’s secretary (*Ant.* 20.208–210). Each one is an account in which certain high profile members of the priesthood are implicated in disruptions that destabilize the situation in Judea. What makes these accounts all the more intriguing is that they are unique to the narrative of *Jewish Antiquities* and some of them offer a different perspective on the named participants from that in *Jewish War*. It has been suggested that the criticism of some priests in these incidents reveals a change of allegiance on the part of Josephus (Schwartz 1990, 92–95). As such, it is important to comment briefly on these incidents and their significance for understanding Josephus’s attitude toward the priesthood.

The allocation of tithes generates infighting during the high priesthood of Ishmael b. Phabi, with the chief priests depriving other priests of the tithes that are due to them; it has been suggested that this story parallels a saying preserved in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Pesah 57a; VanderKam 2004, 465). This is a dispute internal to the priesthood and does not relate to the community at large (McLaren 2009, 146–155). Josephus's concern here is the inability of those who should have been overseeing public affairs to keep their focus on such matters (*Ant.* 20.181).

In two of the incidents, Josephus directly targets Ananias and his supporters. Josephus is critical of how Ananias managed to increase his public standing through bribes and gifts (*Ant.* 20.205), namely, depriving other priests of their tithes (*Ant.* 20.206–207), as well as how Ananias used his influence to broker deals allowing the *sicarii* to become more powerful after kidnapping associates of his son (*Ant.* 20.210). In other words, Josephus depicts Ananias as someone who put himself and his family above the interests and well-being of the community.

When relating the actions of Ananus as high priest in *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus provides quite a different portrayal of the chief protagonist to that offered in *Jewish War*. In this earlier text, Ananus is praised for leading the war effort against the Romans with wisdom and due diligence, and his death at the hands of other Jews was a tragic event (*War* 4.318–325). Here in *Jewish Antiquities*, however, Ananus behaves inappropriately, abusing his position as high priest (*Ant.* 20.201). Yet a key aspect of this story is that Josephus is targeting the Sadducees, not Ananus (*Ant.* 20.199). Any variation in how Ananus is portrayed in the two texts has more to do with the differences in the narrative contexts than with a concern to depict the *real* Ananus.

There is explicit criticism of prominent priests in this final part of *Jewish Antiquities* relating to the years immediately before the war, but this is not evidence of Josephus shifting allegiance away from the priesthood. His ongoing support for the role of the priests in the Jewish community is clearly expressed in *Life* and *Against Apion*, while some incidents that offer criticism of elements of the priesthood are best explained by circumstances in Rome following the completion of *Jewish War*. Interest in the war did not wane with the completion of Josephus's account; apart from the ongoing Roman commemoration of the war in coinage and architectural memorials, Josephus informs us that others, such as Justus of Tiberias, were writing their own accounts of the war (on Justus of Tiberias, see [Chapter 3](#) by Mason on *Life* in this volume). Perhaps it was within this context that Josephus felt compelled to revise his depiction of his own role, and that of the priests, in the war. He did so by carefully targeting certain priests to whom he felt no particular allegiance, Ananias and his supporters, with whom he and other priests had been in dispute at the time the war commenced.

17.7 Conclusion

Josephus's identity is often discussed with reference to his relationship with the Pharisees (*Life* 12), while the Roman context of his Flavian patronage is also brought to bear. Yet of far more fundamental importance for understanding Josephus is his identity as a priest and his allegiance to this group. His outlook was first and foremost that of a priest when writing accounts of Jewish history. For Josephus, the temple and the priests, who had been divinely commissioned to oversee its operation, lay at the heart of his worldview and of the constitution of the Jewish people.

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FURTHER READING

Rajak (1983) offers a clear summary of the importance Josephus attached to his identity as a priest. Schwartz (1990) has provided the most detailed case for Josephus moving away from an allegiance to the priesthood, especially the high priesthood, in the later part of his career. Although addressing a much

narrower subject matter, the high priesthood, Thoma (1989) advocates that Josephus's informing worldview was that of a priest (see also Rappaport 1930 and Gussman 2008). VanderKam (2004) provides a helpful summary of the available information on all the high priests during the Second Temple period.

CHAPTER 18

Josephus and Halacha

David Nakman

18.1 Introduction

Josephus's writings contain a vast amount of halachic material which can be divided into three categories: (1) a summary of biblical law in *Jewish Antiquities* 3 (3.224–286) and 4 (4.67–75, 196–301); (2) a general, and sympathetic, description of Jewish laws in the second part of *Against Apion* (*Apion* 2.190–219); and (3) this category includes halachic details that are spread throughout Josephus's works.

Josephus's halachic material is of great interest for several reasons. There is no doubt that, as member of a Jerusalemite priestly family, he was well educated (see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume). According to his own testimony, at a very young age, he was considered an exceptional student and “the high priests and principal men of the city” used to visit him in order to hear his “accurate understanding of the law” (*Life* 8–9). Josephus declares in several places that his knowledge of the law is exceptional (e.g., *Ant.* 1.25, 3.94, 4.198, 20.268). For example, on finishing his *Jewish Antiquities* he writes:

And now I take heart from the consummation of my proposed work to assert that no one else, either Jew or gentile, would have been equal to the task, however willing to undertake it, of issuing so accurate a treatise as this for the Greek world. For my compatriots admit that in our Jewish learning I far excel them.

(*Ant.* 20.262–263; trans. Feldman, LCL; see also *Life* 198)

We should not be misled by these claims he make about his own abilities, and the halachic material he includes needs to be carefully examined. As a rule, Josephus attributes to all Jews extraordinary knowledge of the laws (e.g., *Apion* 2.178; see Feldman 1997, 44–47; Nakman 2004, 312–313).

Josephus's work provides a unique source for halacha at the end of the Second Temple period and into the mishnaic period. Since he wrote more than a century before the Mishnah, his work reveals significant information about the development of halacha, and since he was not a *tanna* (mishnaic sage) and is not mentioned in rabbinic literature, he provides a non-rabbinic viewpoint. Josephus barely mentions sages from the Mishnah, and those few he does

mention appear within a political context, not a halachic-legal one (on Josephus and rabbinic literature, see [Chapter 19](#) by Kalmin in this volume). An examination of the extent to which his halacha matches rabbinic halacha can yield interesting results.

Josephus indicates that he has experienced all three sects before deciding to join the Pharisees (*Life* 10–12; on Josephus and the Jewish sects, see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). Josephus’s attitude towards the Pharisees is a major issue in Josephan studies and cannot be summarized in this chapter (see Mason 1991). An examination of Josephus’s halachic writings supports Steve Mason’s view that Josephus had joined the Pharisees politically (see below); sympathy for the Pharisees and their teachings, as reflected in Josephus’s writing, suggests that he held a real affinity for them. On account of his social and family background, he was also familiar with the Sadducees and their teachings. It is sometimes assumed that since Josephus spent time in the desert with Bannus (*Life* 10–12), he became familiar with ideas close to those held by the Qumran sect or the Essenes. While Josephus had a good knowledge of, as well as some experience with, three of these Second Temple sects, he cannot be completely identified with any of them. It is possible that Josephus, similar to many Jews of his era, did not belong to any sect and lived by a common Judaism (as defined by E. P. Sanders 1992). By studying Josephus’s halachic material, we can assess both his sectarian affiliations and his familiarity with the practices of those common Jews who did not belong to the sects.

This study examines Josephus’s halachic material in the two major sections noted above (*Ant.* 3.224–286 and 4.67–75, 196–301; *Apion* 2.190–219), as well as in the larger narrative. We can assess the characteristics of his halachic material and offer some conclusions regarding how his rendering of Jewish legal traditions and practices contribute to our understanding of the social-religious map of first-century Jewry.

18.2 Legal Sections in *Jewish Antiquities* 3–4

Books 1–4 of *Jewish Antiquities* portray the history of the Hebrews as described in the Pentateuch, and provide the context within which Josephus presents an overview of biblical law (for Josephus’s treatment of the Bible, see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume; for a general introduction to *Jewish Antiquities*, see [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz in this volume). In *Jewish Antiquities* 3.224–286, Josephus offers a summary of the commandments that mainly concern sacrifice and purity laws as set out in Leviticus and at the beginning of Numbers. In *Jewish Antiquities* 4:67–75, after the story of Korah, there is a short list of laws concerning the priesthood and funerals that matches the order in which they appear in the Bible (Numbers 18). The

longest and most important list is found in *Jewish Antiquities* 4:196–301: Josephus interrupts his historical-literary narrative in order to review the “constitution” Moses delivered to the people of Israel in the desert. This mainly concerns the courts and laws of damages as they appear in Deuteronomy and is combined with integrated legal rulings from other locations in the Torah. In the introduction to this section, Josephus declares that his intention is to describe the laws exactly as they were handed down by Moses without altering anything, and he will only permit himself to rearrange and edit the material (*Ant.* 4.196–197). However, even a superficial review of that section, as well of the previous two, reveals that despite the fact that he was basically keeping close to the biblical original, he not only edited the laws as they appear in the Bible but he constantly added, removed, and changed them. How can we explain these changes? Should one consider it simply as Josephus’s own interpretation? Or—and this is, of course, a more interesting option—were Josephus’s changes or interpretations of the law in accordance with the halacha of his era?

Most scholarship on Josephus’s halachic material concentrates on comparing Josephus’s halacha with rabbinic halacha. Some studies have emphasized the differences while others stress the common points (see the Further Reading section). However, before embarking on comparisons between Josephus and rabbinic halacha, one must take as a starting point Josephus’s treatment of the law in its biblical context (see Gallant 1988). Indeed, anyone comparing the legal sections in *Jewish Antiquities* 3–4 with the Bible immediately realizes that Josephus generally delivers the law in its biblical format and usually in a succinct manner. The concise nature of his account no doubt has resulted in inaccuracies. For example, in *Jewish Antiquities* 3.275, after describing the laws forbidding incest, based upon Leviticus 18 and 20, he says that, “for those who have committed these outrages he designated the penalty of death” (trans. Feldman, BJP), while the Bible distinguishes among various levels of severity and punishments. In another example, in *Jewish Antiquities* 4.231, when Josephus writes about gifts to the poor in the field and in the vineyard, he makes a general note that when the summer crops are collected, people should leave a few sheaves for the poor, but he does not go into the level of detail regarding the different offerings for the poor (from the corner of the field, gleanings, or forgotten sheaves) that we find in the later halacha based on distinctions in the Bible. From such examples (and there are many; see Nakman 2004, 83–88, 144–151), we cannot reach any conclusions about Josephus’s knowledge of halacha, or about the stages of development of halachic traditions.

It is also important to remember that Josephus mainly writes for a gentile audience (see *Ant.* 1. 5; Feldman 1998, 46–50). He probably knew that his writings would also be read by Greek-speaking Jews, and he was careful in describing the laws (*Ant.* 4.197), but the level of detail reflects the general

nature of a review for a gentile readership and not a detailed halachic essay for the Jewish reader.

Taking these considerations into account, one can examine his knowledge of, and attitudes towards, later halachic traditions. A comparison of Josephus's halachic material with rabbinic halacha demonstrates that in a little more than half the cases, Josephus's halacha matches that of the rabbis, while the other half does not (cf., the exaggerated estimates offered by Goldenberg 1978 and Feldman 1997). However, it is a complicated picture and each case of halachic comparison can be explained in more than one way. This chapter offers a number of case studies for each phenomenon (for a detailed examination, see Nakman 2004, 42–169).

Let us begin with the cases where halacha in Josephus matches rabbinic halacha. In some of these examples, casual parallels reflect a self-evident interpretation; for example, Josephus wrote (*Ant.* 3.226) that a lamb for a burnt offering (*olah*) must be one year old. This ruling does not appear in Leviticus 1, on which Josephus bases his account, but it matches the Mishnah (m. Parah 1.3). Can we deduce from this that Josephus was familiar with tannaitic halacha or does it reflect actual practice in the temple? It could be either, but it is also possible that Josephus expressed his personal opinion (intentionally or unintentionally), since the expression “one lamb of the first year for a burnt offering” appears repeatedly in Numbers 7, which deals with these sacrifices.

In other cases where Josephus and rabbinic halacha correspond, there is no doubt that he was familiar with these traditions or interpretations since his version has no basis in the Bible. In these cases it seems that Josephus and rabbinic literature reflect common halachic practice in the first century C.E. This is true for many halachic interpretations. For example, Josephus writes (*Ant.* 4.208) that the priests wore garments made of wool and linen (*sha'atnez*) and this corresponds to the Mishnah (m. Kil'ayim 9.1). There is no reference to this rule in the Bible—on the contrary, wearing *sha'atnez* is forbidden—thus Josephus and the Mishnah most likely describe the practice followed in the temple. Another example of this correspondence relates to redeeming the second tithe: according to rabbinic halacha and Josephus, this can take place anywhere outside of Jerusalem (*Ant.* 4.205//b. *Makot* 19b) and not only in faraway places, as is written in Numbers 14.22–27. Josephus notes that tithe money was used to buy cattle for “*shlamim*” (offerings), but this is again contrary to what is literally written in the Bible but agrees with the rabbinic halacha (m. Ma'aser Sheni 1.3–4). It is interesting that the halacha permitted *any* kind of food or drink for the tithe money, but only *recommended* cattle for *shlamim*. Thus, Josephus introduces here the acceptable custom and not the theoretical halacha.

These cases clearly show that rabbinic law was already developed during the first century C.E. and that Josephus was aware of these interpretations. This

does not necessarily indicate that Josephus was a Pharisee, or that Pharisaic halacha was dominant, since there is no evidence that any group objected to it and so it is possible that it is part of a broad halachic practice common to all sects as well as to “common” Jews. However, there are a number of examples where Josephus’s interpretation supports Pharisaic opinion that is opposed by other sects. In some of these cases, Josephus’s testimony shows that Pharisaic halacha was practiced in the temple. Josephus’s ‘position’ in these cases is not a controversial one, nor does it necessarily reflect his identification with Pharisaic halacha. Examining these cases carefully, it seems that Pharisaic halacha was generally accepted, and other opinions that appear in rabbinic or sectarian literature were long rejected or were never really accepted. For example, his interpretation of the biblical expression “the morrow after the Sabbath” as the first day after Passover (Leviticus 23.11//*Ant.* 3.250) is related to that of the Pharisees (e.g., m. Menahot 10.3), and is contrary to the Boethusians’ position as described in rabbinic literature. It is not possible here to examine this issue (for discussion and literature, see e.g., Regev 2005, 83–90). It will suffice to note that the LXX and Philo (*Spec. Laws* 2.162) also translated this expression in the same way as Josephus and the sages. This interpretation is based literally on the text of Joshua (5.1), and therefore it seems reasonable that the Pharisaic position was generally accepted.

In a halacha regarding the fruit of the fourth year (“*neta revai*”), Josephus clearly supports the Pharisaic ruling. He notes (*Ant.* 3.227) that these fruit are eaten by the owners and are not brought to the temple, contrary to the words in Leviticus 19.24. In accordance, he does not list the *neta revai* in the list of gifts for the priests (*Ant.* 4.69–75). He supports fully the Pharisaic interpretation (Ma’aser Shenii 5; Sifre Numbers 6) and opposes that found in *Jubilees* (7.36), the *Temple Scroll* (60.2–4), 4QMMT (B 62–63), and Philo (*Virtues* 159). This is a clear case in which Josephus supports Pharisaic halacha over other interpretations.

There are other more problematic cases. For example, where a man claims that his bride was not a virgin (*Ant.* 4.246–248//Deuteronomy 22.13–21), Josephus describes in length the process of investigation, but he omits the biblical injunction, “and they shall spread the garment.” Here there is also a controversy between the Boethusians and the Pharisees: the Boethusians believed that the words should be taken literally (i.e., the dress upon which can be seen the virgin blood should be spread in front of the city’s elders), while the Pharisees believed it to be allegorical (*scholion to Megilat Ta’anit, 4th of Tamuz*). How can this omission by Josephus be interpreted? Can it be attributed to the concise nature of Josephus’s review? Or can one assume that he would have included this important detail if he had agreed with the Boethusians and therefore he must have supported the Pharisees in this matter? There is no clear answer.

Overall there are about ten cases where it seems that Josephus supported

Pharisaic opinion when we know that there are different sectarian halachic interpretations (for details of these cases, see Nakman 2004, 319–320). While each case should be examined separately, the main evidence supports the idea that at least in a number of cases, Josephus agreed with the Pharisaic halachic interpretation. However, as we shall see, there are cases where Josephus supported sectarian opinion.

While fewer in number (although not significantly so), we do find cases where Josephus's halachic interpretation contradicts that of the sages (less than half the time) and there is usually a simple explanation. In some cases, Josephus seems to reproduce an ancient halachic tradition while the rabbinic halacha represents a later interpretation, or Josephus reflects practical custom while the sages represent theoretical halacha. For example, Josephus writes (*Ant.* 3.245) that “the boughs of goodly trees” (Lev 23.40) from which the fruit is taken on *Sukkot* is the “*persea*” (see Feldman 2000, 301 n. 700: “a fleshy one-seeded fruit of the laurel family, the most common member of which is the avocado”). Some of Josephus's translators use the original biblical term or simply “citron,” but there is also a possibility that Josephus is repeating an older halacha or custom that permitted the *persea* tree to serve as “boughs of goodly trees” (see Nakman 2004, 74–75 nn. 17–18). Another example can be found in *Jewish Antiquities* 4.209 where Josephus describes the high priest as the one who reads the Torah at the “*hakhel*” ceremony. In Deuteronomy 31.10–13, the identity of the reader is not clearly stated, but according to the Mishnah (m. Sotah 7.8), it is the king. However, as has been noted by scholars, since in the first century there was only one king (Agrippa I) who ruled for only three years (41–44 C.E.), it would be practical for the high priest to read at this ceremony. This would accord with the procedure as described in the Mishnah where the high priest hands the Torah to the king. In the absence of a king, the Torah remains in the high priest's hands and obviously he is the one to read it.

The case of the stubborn and rebellious son (“*ben sorer u-moreh*”: *Ant.* 4.260–265//Deuteronomy 21.18–22) is more complicated. Josephus presents rulings that contradict those of the rabbis: according to Josephus, a son is declared “*sorer u-moreh*” when his behavior towards his parents is generally disrespectful, while the tana'im set clearly defined conditions (e.g., Tosefta Sanhedrin 11.6); according to Josephus, and again contradicting the sages, even a daughter can be “*sorer u-moreh*” (at *Ant.* 4.260 he uses the term “*tôn neôn*,” “young people,” not “sons”); and Josephus locates the trial of the son or daughter within the family, not in a court of twenty-three judges. It is possible that Josephus's version reflects an earlier halacha that existed before the sages developed rigid rules that were meant to prevent executions within families (on the rabbis responding to the lack of clear rules and definitions, see Gilat 1994). Another explanation is that Josephus's motive was apologetic since by presenting this rule in such a manner, Jewish custom was seen to

correspond with Roman ideas about a father's complete authority over his son (*patria potestas*) (see Feldman 2000, 431 n. 845).

There are a few other cases where scholars have explained Josephus's presentation of Jewish laws and customs as serving an apologetic purpose for his gentile, Roman audience (this discussion goes as far back as Olitzki 1885, 27–33). One example is the prohibition against robbing the treasures and temples of foreign gods (*Ant.* 4.207), which contradicts the biblical law that commands the destruction of all things idolatrous (e.g., Exod. 23.24). There are not many cases where Josephus's halachic interpretations are deemed apologetic (cf. Altshuler 1977 and Goldenberg 1978, 218–235), and it is possible that he is describing an ancient halacha or an existing custom.

As for the cases where Josephus holds a distinctly sectarian opinion in opposition to the rabbinic and Pharisaic interpretation, each needs to be examined carefully. For example, Josephus is closer to the Boethusians' literal interpretation of the law of "measure for measure" (*midah ke-neged midah*; *Ant.* 4.280//Exod. 21.23–25) unlike the earlier Pharisees who reject that interpretation and maintained that "an eye for an eye = capital" (*scholion to Megilat Ta'anit for 4th Tamuz*). However, scholars have noted that since Rabbi Eliezer Ben-Horkanus's opinion—as found in Mekhilta d-rabbi Yishma'el (Mishpatim 8)—is closer to that of the Boethusians', it is possible that Josephus did not reflect a sectarian halacha but an earlier Pharisaic interpretation (of which Rabbi Eliezer was a prominent representative). Another example can be found in *Jewish Antiquities* 3.261–269 where Josephus offers a list, based on Numbers 5.1–4, of the impure who must be removed from the camp until they undergo purification, and he adds to this the menstruating woman (*niddah*). Josephus's list is similar to that found in the Temple Scroll (48.14–17) and does not correspond with rabbinic law. It might seem that Josephus adopts a strict sectarian view, but there is evidence, even within rabbinic literature and among other groups (in different periods), for this practice (see Dinari 1980). The case does not prove that Josephus supports the sectarian halacha of the Qumran community, as he could be reflecting a custom common within wider society.

It should be noted that the number of cases where Josephus supports a sectarian position are fewer than those where he supports the Pharisees, and they are less significant. There is more evidence to suggest that he favors the traditions of the Pharisees and those found in rabbinic literature. In our examination of the halachic material in *Against Apion*, we will see that there are some significant cases in which Josephus supports sectarian halachic interpretations.

To summarize, the laws in *Jewish Antiquities* 3–4 present a complex picture: Josephus basically remains close to the laws as they appear in the Bible, often presenting them in a superficial way without adding extra details. However, alongside these, we find dozens of halachic details and customs that have no

basis in the Bible. These details sometimes reflect Josephus's personal interpretation, and at other times alternative halachic traditions. There are many parallels with rabbinic halacha, and in some of these cases, Josephus and the rabbis reflect a first-century halachic practice or interpretation. When Josephus does not agree with rabbinic halacha, there can be several possible reasons: his desire to remain close to the biblical text meant he rejected general practice; rabbinic halacha belongs to a later tradition while Josephus reflects an earlier one; Josephus introduces a practiced custom that differs from the theoretical halacha; and Josephus alters the halacha for apologetic reasons.

Josephus's halachic material is clearly an important source for understanding the development of halacha in the first century C.E. While he seems to support Pharisaic/rabbinic halachic opinions, these, in most cases, actually reflect the general practice of Jews, whether or not they belonged to a sectarian group. Sometimes he also presents an earlier stage in the development of a halacha. However, sometimes he supports other halachic methods.

18.3 Halacha in *Against Apion*

In *Against Apion* 2.190–219, Josephus presents a collection of laws to introduce the moral aspects of the Jewish constitution. The topics are clearly ordered and serve the larger apologetic purpose of the work (on the *Against Apion*, see [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay in this volume). First, a general framework for understanding Jewish constitution is introduced: loyalty to one God, one temple, rule by the priests, and sacrifices, prayers, and purifications. This is followed by a presentation of key Jewish customs: laws regarding the family, social laws, laws determining how to treat strangers, and rules regarding punishment. The apologetic nature of the presentation is clear: the section on family law offers an ideal description of the institution of marriage with the obligation to raise and educate children at its center; the section on the treatment of strangers is particularly positive, even noting that animals should be treated with dignity; and finally, Jewish severity in punishment is highlighted (see Gerber 1997, 183–203; Castelli 2001).

The strict nature of the Jewish system of laws is very clear from this section in *Against Apion*: according to Josephus, the Bible allows intercourse between a man and a woman only for the purpose of reproduction (2.199); the punishment for contravening biblical laws is death (2.215); and even the punishment for crimes regarding property are more severe than among other nations (2.216–217). The stringency outlined here seems to differ significantly from Josephus's presentation in *Jewish Antiquities*, both in spirit (i.e., there are no severe punishments in *Jewish Antiquities*) and in the halachic details.

For example, according to *Jewish Antiquities* 4.252, a man who rapes a virgin should pay a fine or marry the violated woman, but in *Against Apion* 2.215, Josephus clearly sets out capital punishment for this crime. Similarly, the punishment for the stubborn and rebellious son is also death (*Apion* 2.206 by stoning; 2.217), while according to *Jewish Antiquities*, the parents are compelled to first admonish their son (for a comparison of the laws in *Against Apion* and *Jewish Antiquities*, see Tomson 2002).

Although the apologetic purpose of the legal section in *Against Apion* is clear, questions remain regarding the sources for Josephus's strict interpretation of the laws. Belkin identifies the interesting parallels between these laws and those found in Philo's *Hypothetica*, for example, attitudes towards animals (*Apion* 2.213//*Hyp.* 7.9); the prohibition against aborting fetuses (*Apion* 2.202//*Hyp.* 7.7); and capital punishment for the rape of a virgin (*Apion* 2.215//*Hyp.* 7.1; Belkin 1936–37, 5–7). He suggested that either Josephus used the *Hypothetica*, or another Alexandrian Jewish source, which Philo also consulted. While this view has been accepted by some scholars, Carras (1993) noted the number of differences between *Against Apion* and *Hypothetica*, and proposed that the similarities simply reflected accepted customs rather than dependency or a common source. Castelli (2001) supports this view and notes that many of the laws found in *Against Apion* are also mentioned in *Jewish Antiquities* 4; Josephus did not need any external source. She explains the divergence between the legal presentations as being due to the different target audiences: the legal sections in *Jewish Antiquities* 3–4 are mainly meant for Jewish readers (who are interested in, and familiar with, halachic details) while the review in *Against Apion* is for a gentile audience (Castelli 2001, 164–167).

Regardless of the issue of sources, we need to ask if the strict halachic system presented in *Against Apion* represents real practice or custom or whether it is purely apologetic. Some of these strict rulings correspond with those in Qumran sectarian texts, for instance, capital punishment for a judge receiving a bribe does not appear in the Bible or rabbinic literature but can be found in Josephus (*Apion* 2.207) and the Temple Scroll (51.12–17); and the prohibition against a person entering Jerusalem who has been cured of leprosy but not yet offered a sacrifice (*mehusar kippurim*) (*Apion* 1.282) is contrary to the literal reading of the Bible and tannaitic halacha (m. Nega'im 14.2) but agrees with 4QMMT (B 64–68; for other examples, see Nakman 2004, 321–322). The strict attitude towards punishment accords with what is known of the Sadducees' position (e.g., *Ant.* 13.294; 20.199). It seems that Josephus included the stricter laws (or interpretations of those laws) as a way of appealing to his gentile audience, and these often reflect sectarian attitudes.

18.4 Halacha and Customs Found in Other Parts of Josephus's Writings

There are hundreds (!) of halachic rulings and details about customs in the rest of Josephus's writings, and they cover a variety of areas: laws regarding holidays and the Sabbath, purity and impurity, prayers and the synagogue, fallow years (*shemitah*), priests, temple and sacrifices, marriage, property laws, capital offenses, etc. (for a comprehensive treatment, see Nakman 2004, 337–364). Sometimes Josephus explains why things are done in a certain way (“we, the Jews, used to do that” or “the law of the Jews requires that ...”), but in most cases he does not offer an explanation and simply includes details with the narrative. These halachic details are found in the re-writing of biblical history in *Jewish Antiquities* 1–11, and when compared with the Bible (and with different versions), the additions can shed light on halacha in Josephus's time. For example, when describing Elkanah and Hannah's trip to Shiloh (*Ant.* 5.346//1 Samuel 1), Josephus notes that they brought tithes to the Tabernacle, a detail not found in the biblical source. While this might seem to be an innocent comment, it probably reflects a debate in the first century C.E. about whether priests can directly collect tithes throughout the country or whether the tithes should be brought to the temple where they would be divided among the priests by the temple authorities. There is evidence of a controversy about this matter between the Sadducees (who supported the former opinion) and the Pharisees (who supported the latter; see Regev and Nakman 5762/2002, 409). Josephus clearly supported the second opinion (see *Ant.* 20.179–181, 205–207; *Life* 80) and it probably explains his inclusion of this detail in his rendering of the biblical story.

Josephus's importance as a source for first-century halacha is demonstrated by his treatment of the issue of fighting on the Sabbath, which is mentioned no less than sixteen times in his writing. Josephus fulfills a double purpose as a source. First, Josephus testifies to events that took place hundreds of years before, which were documented by historians that preceded him (e.g., the description of the conquest of Jerusalem by Ptolemy, son of Lagos, quoted from Agatharchides in *Apion* 1.209, and perhaps from another source in *Ant.* 12.4–7, and other ancient events from the Maccabean era). Second, Josephus mentions the dilemma regarding fighting on the Sabbath in connection with the rebellion of 66–70 C.E. and with reference to his own career (e.g., *Life* 161, and in some other places in *War*). Here we can detect a clear distinction between Josephus's own opinion and earlier testimonies, as well as his way of treating them (cf. Doering 1999, 48). Laws regarding taking up arms on the Sabbath provide an important test case for understanding the complexity of the halachic details woven into his historical narratives (for a detailed discussion and bibliography, see Nakman 2004, 273–281).

A final example that also indicates the importance of Josephus as a source for

halachic traditions relates to the story of the divorce of Herod's sister, Salome, from Costobar, governor of Idumea. Josephus writes:

Some time afterwards Salome had the occasion to quarrel with Costobar and soon sent him a document dissolving their marriage, which was not in accordance with Jewish law. For it is (only) the man who is permitted by us to do this, and not even a divorced woman may marry again on her own initiative unless her former husband consents.

(*Ant.* 15.259; trans. Marcus, LCL)

This view agrees with rabbinic halacha according to which a man can divorce his wife but not vice versa. This issue became important with the discovery of the Se'elim 13 papyrus, which has been identified by some scholars as a divorce paper given by a wife to her husband. Josephus's text supports those scholars who regard the papyrus as a *ketubah* voucher, and not as a bill of divorce, which leads them to reject the idea that there is evidence for the existence of a different opinion to that of the sages (see Schremer 1998).

While there are many more examples of halachic details that can be found in Josephus's writings, we have seen the importance of Josephus as a source for any discussion regarding the development of ancient halacha and the need for careful, individual analysis of each case.

18.5 Conclusion

One of the most important issues for scholars of the Second Temple period, the Mishnah, and Talmud is the place and status of the Pharisees—and their successors, the rabbis—and their legal traditions in ancient Jewish society. Against the conservative, classical view that described normative Jewry as Pharisaic-rabbinic, there has emerged a new approach that reduces the influence of the Pharisees-rabbis and conceives of the existence of various “Judaisms” or a “common” Judaism (for a summary and bibliography, see Mason 1991, 1–17). Studies of Josephus's halacha can make a significant contribution to this debate; he is a well-versed and knowledgeable source for halachic traditions, and a critical treatment of this material provides offers an insight not only into Josephus's identity, but also into the characteristics of first-century halacha.

As far as Josephus's affiliations are concerned, an analysis of his halachic material shows that he does not follow one legal tradition, and his halacha should be described as eclectic. He does mostly reflect the Pharisaic and rabbinic interpretation, but we must keep in mind that most rabbinic halacha reflect accepted customs. In addition, it is important to note that Josephus does not show special interest in topics that (to our knowledge) were of sectarian

concern. For example, a detailed examination of the purity/impurity laws in his writings reveals that this topic was not a priority for him (see Nakman 2004, 170–254), while it was central to those with a sectarian worldview and was the basis for inter-sect disputes, as is evident from rabbinic literature and the Qumran scrolls (mainly the Temple Scroll and 4QMMT). Wherever Josephus includes interpretations that we know were contested, he does not even hint at the existence of a dispute. Was he aware of them? It is clear that this omission must be explained by the fact that Josephus targeted his writings to a gentile audience. However, it can be assumed that if he were a member of a sect, it would somehow arise. The absence of the *tana'im* and their teachings along with that of other sectarians, and with his notice about his period of investigation among the three sects, brings us to the conclusion that Josephus was what was called “a common Jew” and that he is typical of an educated Jew who does not belong to any sect. Josephus basically supports the Pharisaic halachic interpretations, but sometimes adopts—consciously or unconsciously—other approaches. Pharisaic halacha was handed down orally and sectarian-halachic writings, whether they were known and accessible, probably did not reach the level of detail and development that we have in the Mishnah. Josephus’s writings reveal a complex halachic reality, and provide an important source for understanding this phenomenon in the first century C.E.

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FURTHER READING

Most of the studies of Josephus's halachic material were written during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and their research methods are somewhat outdated. A review of these studies can be found in Goldenberg (1978, 4–14) and Feldman (1984, 492–527).

A short and good article on the subject is Feldman (1997). For *Jewish Antiquities* 3–4, the following are very useful: Schalit (1944), Nodet (1990–1995), and especially Feldman (2000).

In my work (Nakman 2004), I have tried to explain the complexity of Josephus's halacha; this work also includes (for the first time) a full list of all halachic material in Josephus (Appendix A).

CHAPTER 19

Josephus and Rabbinic Literature

Richard Kalmin

19.1 Introduction

This chapter compares traditions in Josephus to parallel traditions in the rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity. For reasons to be discussed below, we know that these parallel traditions did not reach the rabbis of Babylonia directly from Josephus, but from traditions that independently reached Josephus and the Babylonian rabbis. Strictly speaking, therefore, we cannot write the reception history of Josephus in rabbinic literature, but we can write the reception history of the traditions shared in common by Josephus and the rabbis. We can describe some of the ways in which Babylonian rabbis tampered with these shared traditions, and can determine with a fair degree of confidence when traditions shared in common by Josephus and the rabbis achieved literary expression in Babylonia (Kalmin 2006, 149–150).

Classical rabbinic texts were compiled in Babylonia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is part of modern-day Iraq, and in Palestine, between the second and approximately the sixth or seventh century C.E. For reasons that are not entirely clear, most of the parallels between Josephus and rabbinic literature are preserved in the Babylonian Talmud (henceforth, “the Bavli”), rather than in the rabbinic compilations of Palestine, composed in much greater physical proximity to Josephus. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the encyclopedic character of the Bavli, compared to the more specialized character of Palestinian rabbinic compilations, focused to a greater extent on the exegesis of scripture and early rabbinic law (Neusner 1986, 94–114, 211–240).

This chapter is based on a comparison between rabbinic and Josephan traditions about the Sadducees (Sussman 1989–1990, 44–45 n. 147; 46; 48–49 n. 168; Stemberger 1995, 38–66). Traditions in the Bavli tend to be hostile toward the Sadducees, while traditions in Palestinian rabbinic compilations tend to reflect a more neutral perspective (Sussman 1989–1990, 50–51 n. 168; Kalmin 2004, 205–214; 2006, 150–154). The Palestinian traditions acknowledge, or even revel in, the existence of individual Sadducees who are wicked, but these individuals are always quickly punished with death by God for their evil deeds, and the Sadducees as a group are harmless, obedient, in fact, to the rulings of the Pharisees. This chapter argues that since it is a fundamental tenet of rabbinic thought that the rabbis possessed traditions that

were authoritative despite their independence from scripture, the introduction into Babylonia of traditions, also preserved in Josephus, that portray the Sadducees as accepting only scripture and rejecting traditions external to the Bible motivated hostile Babylonian rabbinic portrayals of the Sadducees. Both the harsh criticisms of the Sadducees and their portrayal as rejecting extra-biblical traditions can be shown to have been incorporated into the Bavli at approximately the same time (the mid-fourth century) and apparently by the same individuals or the same group of people, supporting my claim that a close relationship exists between these two phenomena.

This study, therefore, describes in detail an important aspect of a much larger phenomenon: the influx of Palestinian traditions into Babylonia and the susceptibility of mid-fourth-century Babylonian rabbis to Palestinian modes of thought and behavior. The ensuing discussion shows that Josephus-like traditions deriving from the west, whether from Roman Palestine or from elsewhere in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, reached Persian-controlled Mesopotamia and found a receptive rabbinic audience there. My conclusion will be that in this one case, Babylonian rabbis were motivated not by events, trends, or personalities in the larger, non-rabbinic Jewish society, but by literature, which produced a significant change in Babylonian rabbinic literature. This conclusion should not be construed as a claim on my part that Babylonian rabbis were always motivated by literature and never by “current events.”

We can trace the reception history of these traditions in Babylonia because of the Bavli’s layered nature, which sometimes makes it possible to separate early from later and Palestinian from Babylonian layers in the Talmud. The layered nature of the Bavli makes it possible for us to describe the extent to which traditions and modes of behavior deriving from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire began to impinge upon the increasingly unified world of Syria, Mesopotamia, and western Persia during Late Antiquity, until the Muslim conquests drastically altered the cultural landscape (Kalmin 2006, 3–8).

The importance of the fourth century in this development has a significant parallel in Christian Mesopotamia, since we also witness at this time the conversion to Christianity of several countries in close proximity to the Babylonian rabbis, as well as the sudden flowering of Christian literature and institutions in the same part of the world at approximately the same time. Christianity reached Mesopotamia from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, further evidence of importance in Mesopotamia of traditions and modes of behavior deriving from the eastern Roman provinces prior to the advent of Islam (Kalmin 2006, 5–8).

19.2 The Portrayal of Sadducees as a Group that Accepts Only Scripture

To appreciate the distinctive features of the traditions in the Bavli it will be helpful to briefly review some of the characteristic features of traditions about the Sadducees in Palestinian rabbinic compilations. The Bavli records several traditions that illustrate the impact of Josephus-like narratives in Babylonia, in situations where Palestinian compilations contain no hint of such an impact.

For example, early Palestinian rabbinic compilations record legal disagreements between the Pharisees and the Sadducees without fireworks or serious disputations. On the basis of these early Palestinian compilations alone, we would get no sense that the Pharisees and Sadducees were opposing sects (Cohen 1984, 29–31; Baumgarten 1983, 412; 1996, 401; Saldarini 1988, 79–106; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume), or that they, or individual members of their groups, sometimes clashed violently. These early compilations contain no hint of the Josephan portrayal of the Sadducees as a group that accepted only scripture and that rejected the “tradition of the fathers,” and this lack of familiarity with the Josephan portrayal is an important reason why the Tannaim did not severely criticize the Sadducees. Later Palestinian rabbinic compilations likewise tend to portray Sadducees in neutral terms, in contrast to the Bavli’s tendency to portray them negatively.

What is the basis for the claim that Josephus-like traditions motivated the Bavli’s negative portrayals of Sadducees? In the Bavli, we find descriptions and portrayals of the Sadducees that are strikingly similar to those found in Josephus, and we will see below that it is easy to see why people portrayed with such characteristics would be anathema to the rabbis. In addition, the negative portrayals of Sadducees and the portrayals of them as a group that accepted only scripture are known to the same Babylonian rabbis, attested beginning in the mid-fourth century C.E. The ensuing discussion refers to the portrayal of the Sadducees in the Bavli prior to the mid-fourth century as the “early” Babylonian portrayal.

A statement in Bavli Horayot 4b is one of several traditions that reflect the early Babylonian conception of the Sadducees, before the acceptance into rabbinic Babylonia of the portrayal of the Sadducees as a group that rejects “the traditions of the fathers.” As noted, the Sadducees were not portrayed in Babylonia as a group that accepted only scripture until the mid-fourth century, which is the time when negative portrayals of Sadducees are first attested in the Bavli. We read in Bavli Horayot 4b:

Said Rav Sheshet ..., “Why did they say, ‘[If the court] rules concerning a matter with which the Sadducees agree, [the members of the court] are exempt [from bringing a sacrifice]?’ Because [the community] should have learned [what the proper ruling is] and they did not learn.”

Rav Sheshet is a late third-, early fourth-century Babylonian rabbi, and his statement does not credit Sadducees with the rejection of the traditions of the fathers and with the acceptance of scripture alone, since the expression “a matter with which the Sadducees agree” is not synonymous with scripture. This expression apparently refers to the fundamentals of Jewish law, whatever their source or mode of derivation. Rav Sheshet appears to be saying that if a court issues a ruling that even the Sadducees accept, it may be assumed that the ruling is common knowledge and/or practice (Goodman 1999, 17–20), agreed upon by all, since the issues on which the Sadducees and the sages agreed represent the bare minimum that every Jew, even a Sadducee, could be assumed to share in common. And if a matter is common knowledge or practice, the court is not obligated to bring a sacrifice, since they have not caused the community to sin. In other words, it is a matter of indifference to Rav Sheshet, with respect to the issue of determining the court’s liability to bring a sacrifice, whether or not a particular law or practice is present in the Bible. The important variable is whether or not the law or practice in question is a matter of common knowledge or agreed upon by every Jew, independent of its provenance. Other early Babylonian rabbis express the same opinion as Rav Sheshet, and there is no record of its having been challenged by Babylonian rabbis prior to the mid-fourth-century C.E. (Kalmin 2004a, 219–223; 2006, 156–159).

Analysis of another set of traditions enables us to fix with precision when the conception of the Sadducees as accepting only scripture made its first appearance in the Bavli. The ensuing discussion argues that this took place during or shortly after the mid-fourth century, in the form of statements attributed to Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, both mid-fourth-century Babylonian rabbis. As noted, this conclusion is essential to my argument, because we will find that the rabbis who present the Sadducees as accepting only scripture are the same rabbis who cited traditions that depict the Sadducees negatively, supporting my claim that the two phenomena are linked. It is therefore likely that not only the few rabbinic traditions that explicitly characterize the Sadducees as accepting only scripture betray the influence of Josephus-like traditions; traditions in the Bavli that are sharply negative toward the Sadducees do so as well. Dating these two phenomena to the mid-fourth century C.E. and later allows us, therefore, to add to growing body of evidence indicating that this era was characterized by Babylonian receptivity to Jewish traditions deriving from the Roman Empire, perhaps from Roman Palestine, adding depth and perspective to our understanding of Jewish culture of Late Antiquity.

It is important to note that the conclusion that the conception of the Sadducees as accepting only scripture manifested itself in Babylonia in the mid-fourth century depends on accepting the attribution of statements to Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak as indicative at least of the approximate period during

which the statements were made. The fact that earlier Babylonian rabbinic traditions attest to one conception of the Sadducees, and later Babylonian traditions attest to another, supports this methodology, a point I will develop below. The findings of this study thus indicate the importance of taking the Talmud's attributions seriously, rather than rejecting them outright, as is the practice of many modern scholars (Kalmin 1994, 1–15).

The first of Abaye's statements is in Bavli Berakhot 29a:

(A) We taught [in a Tannaitic tradition]: Do not trust yourself until the day of your death, for Yohanan the High Priest served in the office of the high priesthood for 80 years and in the end he became a Sadducee.

(B) Said Abaye, "[King] Yannai and Yohanan [the High Priest] are one [and the same person]."

At first blush Abaye's statement is strange. What induces him to equate King Yannai and Yohanan the High Priest, given the obvious fact that they have different names and are portrayed so differently throughout rabbinic literature?

It is likely that a lengthy narrative, quoted by Abaye in Bavli Kiddushin 66a, helps answer this question:

(A) Abaye said, "What is the basis for [my opinion]?"

(B) It is taught [in a Tannaitic teaching]: Yannai the king went to Kohlit in the desert and conquered 60 cities. When he returned, he rejoiced greatly and called to all of the sages of Israel.

[He] said to them, "Our ancestors ate mallows when they built the Temple, so too we shall eat mallows in memory of our ancestors."

They placed mallows on golden tables and ate. And there was an elder there, a scoffing, evil, worthless man named Elazar ben Po'erah.

And Elazar ben Po'erah said to Yannai the king, "Yannai the king, the hearts of the Pharisees are against you."

[Yannai] said to him, "What shall I do?"

[Elazar] said to him, "Make them swear an oath by the frontlet between your eyes."

[Yannai] made them swear an oath by the frontlet between his eyes.

There was an elder there and Yehudah ben Gedidi'ah was his name.

And Yehudah ben Gedidi'ah said to Yannai the king, "Yannai the king, the crown of kingship is enough for you, leave the crown of priesthood to the seed of Aaron."

For people had said, "His mother had been taken captive in Modi'im."

The matter was investigated but not confirmed, and the sages departed in anger.

And Elazar ben Po'erah said to Yannai the king, "Yannai the king, such is the law for a commoner in Israel. For you who are king and high priest, should such be the law?"

[Yannai said to him], "What shall I do?"

[Elazar said to Yannai], "If you listen to my advice, trample them."

[Yannai said to Elazar], "And what will become of the Torah?"

[Elazar said to Yannai], "It is bound up and lying in a corner. Whoever wants to learn it, let him come and learn."

(C) Said Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, "Immediately heresy was cast into him."

(D) For [Yannai] should have said, "It is well [with regard to] the written Torah. What about the oral Torah?"

(A) "Immediately the evil sprouted forth as a result of Elazar ben Po'erah, and all of the sages were killed, and the world was desolate until Shimon ben Shetach came and restored the Torah as of old."

This narrative makes no explicit mention of Sadducees, but it closely parallels Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 13.288–300, which identifies the opponents of the Pharisees as Sadducees:

As for Hyrcanus, the envy of the Jews was aroused against him by his own successes and those of his sons; particularly hostile to him were the Pharisees, who are one of the Jewish schools, as we have related above. And so great is their influence with the masses that even when they speak against a king or high priest, they immediately gain credence. Hyrcanus too was a disciple of theirs, and was greatly loved by them. And once he invited them to a feast and entertained them hospitably, and when he saw that they were having a very good time, he began by saying that they knew he wished to be righteous and in everything he did tried to please God and them—for the Pharisees profess such beliefs; at the same time he begged them, if they observed him doing anything wrong or straying from the right path, to lead him back to it and correct him. But they testified to his being altogether virtuous, and he was delighted with their praise. However, one of the guests, named Eleazar, who had an evil nature and took pleasure in dissension, said, "Since you have asked to be told the truth, if you wish to be righteous, give up the high priesthood and be content with governing the people." And when Hyrcanus asked him for what reason he should give up the high priesthood, he replied, "Because we have heard from our elders that your mother was a captive in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes." But the story was false, and Hyrcanus was furious with the man, while all the

Pharisees were very indignant.

Then a certain Jonathan, one of Hyrcanus's close friends, belonging to the school of the Sadducees, who hold opinions opposed to those of the Pharisees, said that it had been with the general approval of all the Pharisees that Eleazar had made his slanderous statement; and this, he added, would be clear to Hyrcanus if he inquired of them what punishment he deserved—for, he said, he would be convinced that the slanderous statement had not been made with their approval if they fixed a penalty commensurate with the crime—, and they replied that Eleazar deserved stripes and chains; for they did not think it right to sentence a man to death for calumny, and anyway the Pharisees are naturally lenient in the matter of punishments. At this Hyrcanus became very angry and began to believe that the fellow had slandered him with their approval. And Jonathan in particular inflamed his anger, and so worked upon him that he brought him to join the Sadducean party and desert the Pharisees, and to abrogate the regulations which they had established for the people, and punish those who observed them. Out of this, of course, grew the hatred of the masses for him and his sons, but of this we shall speak hereafter. For the present I wish merely to explain that the Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down, and those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed. And concerning these matters, the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences, the Sadducees having the confidence of the wealthy alone but no following among the populace, while the Pharisees have the support of the masses. But of these two schools and of the Essenes a detailed account has been given in the second book of my *Judaica*.

And so Hyrcanus quieted the outbreak, and lived happily thereafter, and when he died after administering the government excellently for thirty-one years, he left five sons. Now he was accounted by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges, the rule of the nation, the office of high priest, and the gift of prophecy, for the deity was with him and enabled him to foresee and foretell the future; so, for example, he foretold of his two elder sons that they would not remain masters of the state. And the story of their downfall is worth relating, to show how far they were from having their father's great fortune.

(trans. Marcus, LCL)

As noted, Abaye, the author of the strange statement identifying Yannai and Yohanan the high priest in Bavli Berakhot 29a, quotes the story about Yannai's conflict with the Pharisees in Bavli Kiddushin 66a. As also noted, the story in Kiddushin motivates, at least in part, Abaye's peculiar statement

in Berakhot, since the story can easily be read (and in fact is read by Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, Abaye's younger contemporary; see below) as depicting King Yannai's adoption of a heresy that bears a striking resemblance to Josephus's description of a fundamental tenet of Sadduceeism, rejection of the "traditions of the fathers," as well as to a belief attributed to the Sadducees elsewhere in the later, anonymous editorial layers of the Babylonian Talmud (Kalmin 2004a, 219–220; 2006, 156–158). While the Kiddushin story nowhere mentions the term "Sadducee," Abaye in Berakhot easily could have inferred that Yannai became a Sadducee, according to Kiddushin, had he known a Josephus-like source, or had he known or shared the anonymous editorial description of them elsewhere in the Talmud. Furthermore, the role of Yannai in Kiddushin is played by John Hyrcanus (the rabbis' Yohanan the high priest) in Josephus, and by Yohanan the high priest in Berakhot.

In other words, Abaye in Berakhot asserts that Yohanan the high priest, who became a Sadducee after eighty years of service as high priest, is the same as Yannai in Kiddushin, who consistently follows the advice of Elazar ben Po'erah. And Elazar ben Po'erah clearly shows himself to be a Sadducee, as described by Josephus and the anonymous editors of the Bavli, when he has the following exchange with King Yannai in the story in Bavli Kiddushin:

[Elazar said to Yannai], "If you listen to my advice, trample them."

[Yannai said to Elazar], "And what will become of the Torah?"

[Elazar said to Yannai], "It is bound up and lying in a corner. Whoever wants to learn it, let him come and learn." ...

Immediately the evil sprouted forth as a result of Elazar ben Po'erah, and all of the sages were killed.

Since the story portrays Yannai as totally dependent on Elazar ben Po'erah and as following all of his advice, it is not much of a leap to conclude that Yannai comes to accept Elazar's claim that all of the Torah is contained in scripture, and killing the sages does not diminish or endanger the Torah in the slightest. When Abaye asserts in Berakhot that Yohanan the high priest and King Yannai are one and the same, he is in effect saying that the belief shared by Yannai and Elazar, according to this plausible reading of Kiddushin, is a tenet of Sadduceeism. Abaye's two statements taken together yield the earliest rabbinic expression of the notion that the Sadducees accept scripture alone, and reject rabbinic tradition.

It is possible, of course, that the attributions to Abaye of the statements in Berakhot and Kiddushin are pseudepigraphical (Neusner 1989, 1–13, 19–44), in which case we have no evidence regarding mid-fourth-century Babylonian rabbinic conceptions of the Sadducees. It strains credulity, however, to claim that Abaye's statements do not derive from a single individual, or at least from a single school or group. For if they are pseudepigraphical, and/or they

derive from different schools, then we render incoherent the claim in Bavli Berakhot 29a that “[King] Yannai and Yohanan [the High Priest] are one [and the same person].” It is understandable why a single person or group would make this statement in combination with the statement in Bavli Kiddushin 66a. We need posit only (as I posited above) that the person or group who identified Yannai and Yohanan the high priest in Bavli Berakhot 29a also knew the story in Bavli Kiddushin 66a, which features King Yannai, and knew as well that the story describes the king’s conversion to Sadduceeism, as is clear from Josephus’s version of the story and as is deducible from the anonymous Babylonian texts cited above.

If the attributions are pseudepigraphical, then the same pseudepigraphers knew all of this information, and for some unknown reason attributed all of it to Abaye, and also attributed it to Abaye’s younger contemporary, Rav Nahman bar Yizhak (see below). The same pseudepigraphers, presumably, attributed a different conception of the Sadducees to early Babylonian rabbis, creating the illusion of chronological development (why, we cannot say), and arranged as well for conceptions about the Sadducees in anonymous editorial additions to conform to those of the later Babylonian rabbis, striving as they were for chronological verisimilitude.

It is much more likely, as noted, that the attributions in this case are trustworthy, or at least are indicative of the approximate time period when the statements were made. It is important to emphasize that this is not an argument in favor of trusting ancient rabbinic attributions in general; it is simply to say that, in the cases under consideration here, it makes sense to do so. My conclusions certainly increase the likelihood that other rabbinic attributions are reliable, but we have no idea how many, nor can we be confident that this is the case (or is not the case!) regarding any statement in the absence of concrete proof.

Be that as it may, if we accept on the basis of his statement in Bavli Berakhot 29a that Abaye believes the story in Bavli Kiddushin 66a is about Sadducees, and if we also accept the attribution to Abaye of the quotation of the story in Bavli Kiddushin 66a, we have proof that some time between Rav Sheshet and Abaye, that is, some time between the late third and the mid-fourth century C.E., the Josephan characterization of the Sadducees as a group that accepted only scripture and rejected rabbinic traditions became known to and accepted by at least one Babylonian rabbi.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, also a mid-fourth-century Babylonian rabbi, comments on the story in Bavli Kiddushin 66a and apparently shares Abaye’s characterization of the Sadducees. Rav Nahman bar Yizhak’s comment and the immediate context are worth examining in detail:

And Elazar ben Po’erah said to Yannai the king, “Yannai the king, such is

the law for a commoner in Israel. For you who are king and high priest should such be the law?"

[Yannai said to him], "What shall I do?"

[Elazar said to Yannai], "If you listen to my advice, trample them."

[Yannai said to Elazar], "And what will become of the Torah?"

[Elazar said to Yannai], "It is bound up and lying in a corner. Whoever wants to learn it, let him come and learn."

Said Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, "Immediately heresy was cast into him." For [Yannai] should have said, "It is well [with regard to] the written Torah. What about the oral Torah?"

In this crucial section of the story, Yannai worries about the fate of the Torah should the sages be disposed of, implying that he at least entertains the possibility that the sages are custodians or teachers of the Torah, and perhaps that their wisdom, independent of scripture, has the status of Torah. When Elazar ben Po'erah replies, "It is bound up and lying in a corner," he asserts that the Torah consists of scripture alone, and the loss of the sages will not affect it in the slightest.

To understand more fully the significance of Rav Nahman bar Yizhak's comment, it is important to note that his statement is divisible into two parts. The first part is in Hebrew and the second part is in Aramaic, and the change in language suggests that the Aramaic section is later, anonymous commentary based on the earlier core (Friedman 1978, 25–26). The Hebrew core of the statement consists of the phrase "Immediately heresy was cast into him," and most likely the "him" referred to is Yannai, who allows the sages to be murdered because he is convinced by Elazar ben Po'erah's argument. According to Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, therefore, Yannai accepts Elazar ben Po'erah's claim that "the Torah" and "scripture" are synonymous, thereby accepting the Sadducean heresy as described by Josephus and as reflected in the statements of Abaye and the Bavli's anonymous editors. The fact that both Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak share this conception, but earlier Babylonian rabbis share a subtly but demonstrably different idea (see above), allows us to approximate when the Josephan portrayal of the Sadducees reached or at least found acceptance in rabbinic Babylonia. This took place during or shortly after the time of Rav Sheshet, approximately midway through the fourth century C.E.

What do we make of the Aramaic continuation ("he should have said, 'It is well [with regard to] the written Torah. What about the oral Torah?'"), which I argued above was most likely an anonymous addition to Rav Nahman bar Yizhak's statement? According to this anonymous addition, Yannai's heresy was his denial of the oral Torah, his refusal to consider as Torah anything but

the written scroll.

This characterization of Yannai's heresy is similar but not identical to the characterization of Sadducean doctrine that I attributed above to the mid-fourth century Babylonian rabbis, Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak. The author of this Aramaic addition grafted onto Rav Nahman bar Yizhak's statement concern for the distinction between the oral and written Torah. For Rav Nahman bar Yizhak minus the anonymous editorial addition, the salient part of Yannai's heresy was his denial of the proposition that the sages' learning was Torah; for the author of the anonymous addition it was Yannai's denial that the Torah was divisible into two parts, distinguishable above all by their mode of transmission (Schäfer 1978, 153–197; Stemberger 1995, 94 n. 108; Jaffee 2001, 10).

Interestingly, modern scholars differ over the question of whether or not the Sadducees portrayed by Josephus reject nonscriptural traditions because these traditions are oral or because they are not part of the Bible. The modern scholarly debate revolves around opposing interpretations of Josephus's description of the Sadducees in the lengthy account cited above, as follows:

The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down, and those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed.

(*Ant.* 13.297; trans. Marcus, LCL)

This modern scholarly debate may have an ancient analogue in the different emphases of Rav Nahman bar Yizhak and the anonymous commentators who added to his statement. Some modern scholars, in other words, have interpreted Josephus's Sadducees as accepting the written Torah and rejecting Pharisaic oral tradition, and it is not out of the question that the anonymous commentators who added to Rav Nahman bar Yizhak's statement in Bavli Kiddushin 66a interpreted Josephus's source in precisely this fashion. Along the same lines, it is possible that Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, minus the anonymous addition to his statement, interpreted Josephus's source to be saying that the Sadducees rejected the Pharisees' traditions because they are nonscriptural and not because they are oral.

To date, the most comprehensive analysis of this controversial passage from Josephus is that of Steve Mason, who explains it in accordance with the interpretation of Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak. Mason translates the passage as follows:

[T]he Pharisees passed on to the people certain ordinances from a succession of fathers, which are not written down in the laws of Moses. For this reason the party of the Sadducees dismisses these ordinances,

averring that one need only recognize the written ordinances, whereas those from the tradition of the fathers need not be observed.

(1991, 217)

Mason claims that this passage

says nothing whatsoever about the question whether the Pharisees actually transmitted their teachings orally or in writing ... Josephus has nothing to say about the matter. His point is that the Pharisaic ordinances were not part of the written Law of Moses and that for this reason they were rejected by the Sadducees.

(Mason 1991, 243)

19.3 Josephus, or Josephus's Source?

I referred above to the fact that it is not entirely clear whether Babylonian rabbis received the traditions discussed above, and comparable traditions, directly from Josephus, or whether Josephus and the rabbis drew upon a common fund of traditions (Milikowsky 2002, 181–190). This issue confronts scholars of any ancient literature whenever we find similar but not identical traditions preserved in diverse compilations. The question is extremely difficult to answer in most cases, but several important considerations with regard to the relationship between Josephus and the Bavli suggests that we are dealing with an Ur-text incorporated into two later compilations. I refer first to the fact that in a large proportion of cases in which Josephus and the Bavli share traditions, the tradition in question is missing from Josephus's earlier work, the *Jewish War*, and is found only in his later work, *Jewish Antiquities*, where its connection to Josephus's larger discussion is tenuous (Cohen 1986, 14; Kalmin 2004a, 235–236; Schwartz 2008, 69–83). It is peculiar that the Babylonian rabbis should exhibit a preference for Josephan materials that fit only loosely into Josephus's larger discussion, and that he discovered between the composition of his earlier and later works. It also bears noting that the sources most closely paralleled in Josephus and in rabbinic compilations are also easily detachable from their contexts in rabbinic literature. In the example discussed above, the narrative serves a legal purpose that is clearly remote from the narrative's main concern. Further indication that Babylonian rabbis did not derive these traditions directly from Josephus is the fact that Josephus composed *Jewish Antiquities* in Greek, which Babylonian rabbis did not understand (Schwartz 2008, 69–70).

It is likely, therefore, that both Josephus and the rabbis are drawing on a common body of traditions that they altered and/or that had undergone development during the one hundred fifty to five hundred years between the

time that Josephus incorporated them into his work and the time the Babylonian rabbis incorporated them into the developing Talmud.

19.4 Conclusion

I started my discussion with the observation that statements and stories in the Bavli tend to be more harshly negative toward the Sadducees than statements and stories in Palestinian rabbinic compilations. The traditions analyzed above suggest that the introduction during the mid-fourth century into Babylonia of traditions used by Josephus explained this distinction. Midway through the fourth century, the characterization of the Sadducees as rejecting the Pharisaic traditions of the fathers achieved currency in Babylonia, and this tradition was evidently unknown to the rabbis of Palestine. Abaye and Rav Nahman bar Yizhak, both mid-fourth-century Babylonian rabbis, knew the story in Bavli Kiddushin 66a that depicts a pernicious heresy, which we know Abaye considered to be Sadducean on the basis of his statement in Bavli Berakhot 29a. The heresy Abaye attested to is strikingly similar to Josephus's depiction of the Sadducees in his version of the same story.

Babylonian rabbis were receptive to this portrayal because a distinguishing mark of the rabbis themselves was their dedication to ancestral traditions that were independent of scripture. The tradition presented Babylonian rabbis with an opportunity to emphasize the importance of sages as a source of Torah. In addition, this portrayal came at the expense of the murderous (not to mention incompetent) Hasmonean monarch, King Yannai, and for reasons I have explored elsewhere, Babylonian rabbis are fond of depicting Hasmonean kings, especially Yannai, as villains (Kalmin 1999, 61–67). This portrayal, namely of the Sadducees as accepting only the Bible and rejecting the traditions of the sages (or the Pharisees), induced Babylonian rabbis to alter the image of the Sadducees in the texts they inherited from Palestine, or, to be more precise, to bring out the theme of the Sadducees' wickedness, only a minor theme in Palestinian texts, and to make it more prominent in their retelling of the stories.

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FURTHER READING

An earlier version of the present chapter appeared in Kalmin (2004a, 205–242 and 2006, 149–112). For further discussion of parallels between Josephus and the rabbis, see Cohen (1986, 7–14); Stemmerger (1995, 106–109); Milikowsky (2002, 181–190), and Schwartz (2008, 60–83). The most comprehensive collection of rabbinic traditions about the Second Temple period is still Derenbourg (1867). These discussions reveal important information about the differing preoccupations of Josephus and Babylonian rabbis, and shed light on the fate of culturally significant traditions deriving from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, in the hands of Josephus on the one hand, and the rabbis of Babylonia on the other.

Regarding the Palestinian rabbinic reception of Josephus, or of traditions held in common by Josephus and Palestinian rabbis, see Zellentin (2013). Zellentin observes that Tannaitic rabbis show little, if any familiarity with Josephan traditions, and he claims that the few parallels between them are most likely the result of shared oral traditions. Zellentin discusses Eikhah Rabba's account of the destruction of Jerusalem, which contains a remarkable series of parallels to Josephus's account in the *Jewish War*. Preliminary research by Zellentin suggests that Palestinian rabbinic compilations may incorporate traditions with affinities to traditions preserved in Josephus's *Jewish War*, in contrast to what we find in rabbinic Babylonia, but further study is necessary.

For further discussion of Bavli Kiddushin 66a and its relationship to the account in Josephus, see, for example, Geller (1979, 202–211); Levine (1980, 70–73); Baumgarten (1995, 36–52); Mason (1991, 215–245); and Kalmin (2006, 53–59). This narrative does not conform to Josephus's tendency to disapprove of the Pharisees and to portray John Hyrcanus as heroic (see [Chapter 13](#) by Gruen in this volume); nor does it conform to the rabbis' tendency to identify with the Pharisees as their spiritual forebears and to portray Hasmonean kings as miscreants. Significantly, neither Josephus nor the Babylonian rabbis radically altered the story to make it conform to their dominant tendencies.

PART IV

Transmission and Reception History

CHAPTER 20

The Text of the Josephan Corpus: *Principal Greek Manuscripts, Ancient Latin Translations, and the Indirect Tradition*

Tommaso Leoni

20.1 Judean War

Surprising as it may be, a review of the most significant manuscripts of the *Judean War* must still begin with the long *praefatio* written in Latin by Benedikt Niese and Justus von Destinon to introduce their own critical edition of Josephus’s Greek text (Destinon and Niese 1894, iii–lxxii). The two distinguished philologists identified and collated seven principal *codices*, along with a great number of other witnesses which for various reasons were deemed to be of lesser importance (Leoni 2009, 150–151 nn. 4–14). The seven manuscripts that stand out for their early date and their intrinsic value are as follows:

P	Codex Parisinus Graecus 1425, parchment, tenth or eleventh century; Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
A	Codex Ambrosianus (Mediolanensis) D 50 sup. = Gr. 234, parchment, early eleventh century; Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.
M	Codex Marcianus (Venetus) Graecus 383, parchment, twelfth century; Biblioteca Nazionale di S. Marco in Venice.
L	Codex Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 19, parchment, eleventh or twelfth century; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.
V	Codex Vaticanus Graecus 148, parchment, tenth or eleventh century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.

R	Codex Palatinus (Vaticanus) Graecus 284, parchment, eleventh or twelfth century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.
C	Codex Urbinas (Vaticanus) Graecus 84, parchment, eleventh century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.

Among the other manuscripts—only occasionally utilized by Niese and Destinon—the most important are:

Rost	Codex Rostgaardianus (Hafniensis) 1569, paper, late fourteenth century; Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen.
N	Codex Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 17, twelfth century; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.
T	Codex Cheltenhamensis (Phillippicus) 6459, paper, eleventh or twelfth century; Cheltenham.
L. B. or Voss.	Codex Vossianus Fol. Gr. 72 (also referred to as “Lugduno-Batavus”), paper, first half of the fifteenth century; Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit in Leiden.

All seven principal witnesses date from around the eleventh century and can be divided into two main groups: PA(ML) and VR(C). Destinon and Niese (1894, xxix–xxxi, xxxvi–xxxvii) chose to rely especially on the first group for their critical edition of *Judean War*, on the assumption that it has greater authority than the second (the value of P and A had already been highlighted in the nineteenth century. It must be emphasized, however, that, in Schrekenberg’s opinion, Niese overestimated the importance of the PA group (Schrekenberg 1972, 32; see also 25). Also worthy of attention are manuscripts M, L, and C (Destinon and Niese 1894, xxxi–xl); they present a text that is sometimes close to one group, sometimes to the other, and on occasion they appear to be the only ones to have preserved the original text. These manuscripts are called “inconstant members” by Thackeray (1927, xxix), since they side now with the PA group, now with VR. There can be little doubt that the formation of different branches in the manuscript tradition started at a very early date; indeed, it has been argued that in a few cases this process seems to go back to revisions and corrections to the text introduced by Josephus himself in later editions of his work (Thackeray 1927, xxix and n. a).

The complexities of the manuscript tradition become obvious if we consider a most interesting piece of evidence, the only papyrus of Josephus, PApion Graec. Vindobonensis 29810, published by Hans Oellacher in the late 1930s

(Oellacher 1939, 2.61–63; Pack 1965, 74 no. 1283; Schreckenberg 1972, 54–55). It is a fragment, unfortunately in poor condition, containing the text of *War* 2.576–579, 582–584 (overall, no more than 112 words in whole or in part). Despite its brevity, which makes it unwise to draw general conclusions about the quality of the other extant witnesses (see Schreckenberg’s caveat in 1972, 55), the importance of this papyrus should not be underestimated, since it goes back to the late third century C.E., and thus it antedates the oldest manuscripts by more than six hundred years. The most striking aspect of P. Vindob. G. 29810 is that it differs conspicuously from all the manuscripts collated by Niese and Destinon, showing no clear similarities with the group PA, nor with the group VRC. This fact suggests—as Louis Feldman has rightly pointed out—that even the text of *Judean War*, which is usually believed to be in much better shape than that of *Judean Antiquities*, is less secure than Niese had supposed and still in need of further emendation (Feldman 1975–1976, 467; Feldman 1984b, 25). Feldman (1989, 332) makes another important observation: the fact that “the papyrus agrees now with one group of manuscripts and now with another” indicates that “we should not rely excessively on one group alone” (as Niese and Destinon did with the PAM group).

The indirect tradition is extremely helpful in reconstituting the text of Josephus. *Judean War* was read with painstaking care by later writers and especially by the church fathers, who most often would quote, summarize, adapt, revise, interpolate, or even censor Josephus in order to further their own religious and political views, their own apologetics. (Anyone working in this area of study is much indebted to Heinz Schreckenberg for his pioneering research: cf. Schreckenberg 1972, 68–171; 1977, 13–43; 1984, 1987; 1992, 7–138. On the ‘use and abuse’ of Josephus’s writings, see also Mason 2003, 7–19; cf. Leoni 2007, with further bibliography.) Such references provide a good deal of precious information, which can be most useful in reconstructing the original Greek text and in selecting the best individual readings from the *apparatus criticus* on a case-by-case basis. Particularly important are the citations found in Eusebius’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Leoni 2009, 153–154 n. 23). The fact that the text of Josephus apparently utilized by the church historian is mostly close to the groups of manuscripts LVRC, MLVRC, VRC, or VR—i.e., the *codices deteriores* according to Niese and Destinon—is indeed noteworthy and open to different interpretations. It must be underlined that Eduard Schwartz’s critical edition of Eusebius’s history—complete with the critical text of Rufinus’s Latin rendering, edited by Theodor Mommsen (1903–1909)—appeared a few years after Niese’s *editio maior* of the *War* (see *Eusebius Werke, II: Die Kirchengeschichte*; the first two volumes contain the critical text of Eusebius’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*—Schwartz 1903; 1908—while the third one has a long introduction with a thorough discussion “*Ueber die Excerpte aus Iustin und Iosephus*,” Schwartz 1909, cliii–clxxxvii).

The work of emendation on the text of Josephus is greatly enhanced also by a close study of the translations made in antiquity. For *Judean War*, two Latin versions were already available by the end of the fourth century: a rather literal one, commonly ascribed to Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 344/345–410/411 C.E.), and the free paraphrase of the so-called Pseudo-Hegesippus, probably written around 375 C.E. (see Leoni 2007, 481–485; Somenzi 2009, 7–10; see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki, [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter, and [Chapter 21](#) by Levenson and Martin in this volume). Both are important, albeit for different reasons: the former because it faithfully follows the original (to the extent, at least, that it becomes a clue to restoring the text of Josephus in several places, Leoni 2007, 481–482 and n. 8); the latter because the oldest codices that contain it predate the earliest Greek manuscripts of *Judean War* by approximately four centuries (the *De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae*—this is probably the original title of Pseudo-Hegesippus’s work—has come down to us in a group of codices, the oldest of which date from the sixth/seventh century; see Leoni 2007, 483 and n. 15). Regrettably, Pseudo-Rufinus’s translation still awaits a full investigation; among other things, a scientific edition is very much needed (it appears that a scholarly edition of this important work was indeed in the making in Italy around the middle of the twentieth century, but unfortunately it never saw the light of day; see G. Ussani 1945). It is a remarkable fact that Pseudo-Rufinus’s rendering of Josephus’s *Judean War* is neglected even in Louis Feldman’s otherwise wide-ranging and most useful bibliographies (evidence in Leoni 2007, 481 n. 6; 2009, 155 n. 29). As for the text of Pseudo-Hegesippus, we can rely on Vincenzo Ussani’s excellent critical edition, published in 1932, which has superseded the one used by Niese and Destinon (see Weber and Caesar 1864; Ussani 1932; in the second volume of Ussani’s edition, Ussani and Mras 1960, Mras discusses the manuscript tradition, the title, and the problem of the authorship). A literal English translation by Wade Blocker has been published in electronic format on the PACE website (cf. Leoni 2008). For further analysis of and bibliography on Pseudo-Hegesippus’s work, see Leoni (2007, 483–448) and Somenzi (2009). On the value of Pseudo-Rufinus’s translation for the Greek text of *Judean War*, see Destinon and Niese (1894, xx–xxi, lvi–lx); Schrekenberg (1972, 59–60); on that of Pseudo-Hegesippus, Destinon and Niese (1894, lx–lxii) and Schrekenberg (1972, 56–58).

On the whole, the present state of the *Judean War*’s text is far from satisfactory. Although, on their first appearance, Niese’s *editiones (maior and minor)* were justly greeted as a major achievement in Josephan studies, today, more than a century later, few would dispute that they should be revised and updated, so as to take into account the most significant advances in scholarship. Heinz Schrekenberg has lucidly highlighted the deficiencies of Niese’s edition. First, following a tendency that was dominant in philology at the time, Niese based *a priori* his textual choices on the alleged value of certain groups of manuscripts (for *Judean War*, the PAM group), rather than

examining case by case the intrinsic quality of all possible variant readings. Second, he excluded a great number of codices from his *recensio*—either because he simply did not know them or because he considered them of little importance. In rectifying Niese’s unilateral approach to the manuscript tradition, the new editor(s) of the text of Josephus should also take advantage of a series of valuable tools that have become available in the interim: more reliable critical texts of such fundamental works as Eusebius’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Pseudo-Hegesippus’s *De excidio*; Schreckenberg’s groundbreaking surveys of the transmission and the use of Josephus’s writings in various literary traditions (Syriac and Arabic, Greek, Latin, medieval European, and Hebrew; see Schreckenberg 1972, 1977); the comprehensive annotated bibliographies edited by Feldman and again Schreckenberg (Feldman 1963, 1984b, 1986, 1989; Schreckenberg 1968, 1979); a vast array of conjectures and textual emendations proposed after the publication of Niese’s edition (noteworthy is especially the Greek text of *Judean War* prepared for the Loeb Classical Library by Thackeray (1927, 1928; the Loeb text is based on that of Niese, but it is “the outcome of a careful and independent investigation of the MS evidence collected in his great edition,” Thackeray 1927, xxvii); and finally, several in-depth studies devoted to the language of Josephus—his grammar, vocabulary, and style—among which pride of place must go to the exhaustive *Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, edited in four splendid volumes by Karl Heinrich Rengstorf with the help of numerous collaborators (Rengstorf et al. 1973, 1975, 1979, 1983; for an inventory and a careful discussion of all the major contributions on the language of Josephus, see Feldman 1984b, 806–816, 819–826, 830–836, 967–971; Feldman 1989, 440–445). Still very useful, although unfortunately not finished, is also Thackeray and Marcus’s *A Lexicon to Josephus*, published in Paris in four fascicles (Thackeray and Marcus 1930–1955). For the form of proper names, Schalit’s *Namenwörterbuch* (1968), which appeared as *Supplement I* to Rengstorf’s *Concordance*, is more reliable and complete than Schlatter (1913).

No doubt the existence of many differing *editiones minores* of the Greek text of Josephus is confusing. Niese’s *editio maior* still offers the (relatively best) text—sometimes “hidden” in the *apparatus criticus*—but at the same time it is obsolete for the reasons explained so far. While it may be too optimistic to think that we can get to a thoroughly new critical edition in the short term, at least a realistic alternative should be explored—that is, the revision of Niese’s text (cf. Schreckenberg 2007). With regard to all the other parts of the Josephan corpus, some remarkable results have been achieved in recent years: the Münster group directed by Folker Siegert has produced an improved text of Josephus’s later works (*Life* and *Against Apion*), while the ongoing French project supervised by Étienne Nodet has led to the publication of the first five volumes of a fresh edition of the *Judean Antiquities* (Books 1–11). Only *Judean War* still awaits a systematic analysis of all the relevant philological

evidence. A new edition of the Greek text of Josephus’s earliest writing remains a very important *desideratum* indeed.

20.2 Judean Antiquities

We have every reason to believe that the initial “editorial” history of *Judean Antiquities* was not in any way different from that of the other literary works of the high imperial period: each book was probably copied into a single scroll (*volumen*), and therefore it was transmitted individually (Niese 1887, vii). Niese draws attention to a most interesting reference supplied by Josephus himself: in *Life*. 365 a supporting letter from Agrippa II is quoted, where the Judaeen king, after having perused “the book” (*tên bublon*; one of the *War*) with greatest pleasure, encourages Josephus to send him also *tas loipas* (i.e., “the remaining volumes” of the *War*). When the *codex* gradually replaced the scroll in the Mediterranean world, gaining widespread favor and becoming the preferred format among Christian copyists (from the second and third centuries onwards), this brought about a fundamental change also for the Josephan corpus: the books belonging to the same work began to be transmitted jointly, so that Josephus’s writings found a new self-contained unity. Unlike *Judean War* and *Against Apion*, however, the sheer length of *Judean Antiquities* prevented the possibility of compressing the *magnum opus* into one single codex and led early on to the formation of four pentads (with *Life* being appended to the last one), which were then consolidated into two fairly distinct groups of ten books (I–X, XI–XX plus *Life*; see Niese 1887, vii–viii). Thus, in line with the example set by the great German philologist, the two decades need to be examined separately.

The most important manuscripts for Books 1–10 of *Judean Antiquities* are the following (bibliography in Leoni 2009, 159–160 nn. 42–51, 164 n. 70):

R	Codex Regius (Parisinus) Graecus 1421, paper, fourteenth century; Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
O	Codex Oxoniensis (Bodleianus) Miscell. Graec. 186, paper, fifteenth century; Bodleian Library in Oxford.
M	Codex Marcianus (Venetus) Graecus 381, paper, thirteenth century; Biblioteca Nazionale di S. Marco in Venice.
S	Codex Vindobonensis historicus

	Graecus 20 (erroneously indicated in Niese as “historicus Graecus no. 2”), parchment, eleventh century; Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.
P	Codex Parisinus Graecus 1419, parchment, eleventh century; Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
L	Codex Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 20, paper, fourteenth century; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.
V	Codex Vaticanus Graecus 147, paper, thirteenth or fourteenth century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.
A	Codex Ambrosianus (Mediolanensis) D 50 sup. = Gr. 234, parchment, early eleventh century; Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.

The other manuscripts are of much lesser value. Instead, the *editio princeps* of the Greek text (Basel, 1544) should not be overlooked, since it seems “to be derived in part from some unknown MS and is occasionally an important authority” (Thackeray 1930, xviii).

A Latin translation of *Judean Antiquities* along with *Against Apion* (but not *Life*) was commissioned by Cassiodorus (ca. 484/490–584/590 C.E.) to some unnamed “friends” (*amici*) and completed around the middle of the sixth century (Cassiod. *Inst.* 1.17.1; Mynors 1937, 55). Although its actual value is controversial, the early date of composition of this version makes it an important source of information (Leoni 2007, 482–483, with discussion and bibliography). A scholarly edition of the first five books appeared in the late 1950s, edited by Franz Blatt (1958). Niese only partially collated it. It should be noted, however, that Blatt’s edition has been severely criticized (see Willis 1961). According to Feldman:

[This edition] is disappointing in that it is based on only a few of the 171 manuscripts, its stemma is less than careful, and manuscripts are cited only to disappear and then reappear without warning ... The work clearly must be done over again; in particular, the stemma should be reconsidered, perhaps with the aid of a computer, since the manuscripts are so numerous.

(1989, 335)

For examples of the usefulness of the Latin translation for the establishment of the Greek text of Josephus’s *magnum opus*, see Lembi (2005) and Nodet (1987).

Also the indirect tradition is worthy of attention. First, excerpts from Josephus

were made under the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959) and were included in the *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* (Exc.), preserved in the *Codex Peirescianus* or *Turonensis*, probably deriving from an ancestor of manuscript M (see Leoni 2007, 486 n. 40; for the text, see Boissevain, de Boor, and Büttner-Wobst 1903–1910). Second, another Byzantine work, the *Epitome Antiquitatum* (E), which Niese tentatively dated to the tenth or eleventh century (as it was used by Joannes Zonaras), mainly follows Josephus’s narrative, but it omits most of the digressions and speeches that can be found in the original (Leoni 2007, 486 n. 41). The *Epitome Antiquitatum*, which is of some value for the emendation of the Greek text of the *Antiquities*, was used by Niese in his *editio maior* of Josephus; in 1896, he edited it separately. Finally, according to Niese, this Greek *Epitome*, rather than Josephus’s own text, is also the ultimate source of Zonaras’s *Chronicon*, a compendium of universal history composed in the twelfth century that extends from the creation of the world to the year 1118 (on Zonaras’s use of Josephus, see references in Leoni 2007, 486 n. 42; cf. Nodet 2010, xvi–xvii).

In general, the text of Books 1–10 of *Judean Antiquities* is problematic and raises some thorny questions. Niese believed that all the manuscripts that have come down to us descend from a single archetype written in the third century C.E., as indicated by several common lacunae. This archetype was already corrupt and interpolated in certain passages, and the spelling of Hebrew names of people and places had been systematically altered by Christian copyists so as to make Josephus’s original text conform with that of the Septuagint. Niese identified two classes of manuscripts, the first and better being represented by two witnesses, R and O, that derive from the same source, while the second class embraces all the other codices (that R and O are descendants of the same ancestor was later confirmed by Schreckenberg 1972, 29, 31; on the grouping of manuscripts into families and classes in Books 1–10 of *Antiquities*, see also Schreckenberg 1977, and especially Nodet 1987). In essence, Niese based his *editio maior* primarily on the readings of R and O, and to a lesser extent M; the manuscripts of the second group, despite their greater age (some of them—such as S, P, and A—date from the eleventh century, thus predating R and O by about three or four hundred years), show signs of numerous and often arbitrary corrections.

The most important scholarly contribution on the first half of *Judean Antiquities* since Niese is the new edition of the Greek text, complete with a French translation and an extensive commentary, by Étienne Nodet. So far, five volumes have appeared, covering Books from 1 through 11 (Nodet 1992, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2010). In the introduction to each volume, Nodet proceeds to a fresh re-examination of the manuscript tradition of the first decade of Josephus’s *magnum opus* (Nodet 1987). Despite repeated words of appreciation for Niese’s *editio maior*, the French scholar proposes a thorough revision of the stemma worked out by the German philologist. The final result

of this process is indeed remarkable: the family of codices favoured by Niese, to which the sixth-century Latin translation is connected, is badly placed in the new stemma (cf. Nodet 1992, xiii; 2005, xi; 2010, xix–xx, and for the stemma, see Nodet 2005, xiii; 2010, xxiv).

The starting point of Nodet’s study is a question of method: Niese had given preference to R and O because the spelling of proper names in those manuscripts appears less contaminated by the Septuagint and therefore it can be more easily traced back to Hebrew. Nodet argues that this can hardly be regarded as conclusive evidence for the superiority of the RO group: contamination is a complex phenomenon (Nodet 1992, xiii), and in any case such “corrections” of proper names on the basis of the Septuagint do not necessarily undermine the value of the SP group (Nodet 1992, xvi–xvii). Furthermore, several readings in patristic citations from Books 1–10 of *Judean Antiquities* (especially those found in Eusebius and John Chrysostom) differ from the rest of the manuscript tradition, and this presupposes the existence of a textual tradition “*extérieure à l’archétype des manuscrits grecs*” (Nodet 2001, ix). Nodet thinks that at least two copies and one revision separate the archetype (X) from Josephus’s original (Z), and that consequently one must postulate a common intermediate source, a ‘hyparchetype’ (Y) (see the stemma, Nodet 2001, xi). Two other significant results of Nodet’s investigation are worth underlining, namely, the reassessment of the Latin translation of the school of Cassiodorus, which, according to the French scholar (Nodet 1992, xiii), is of lesser importance, despite its early date of composition, and the new light shed on manuscript V (Vaticanus Graecus 147), which offers some valuable readings and therefore merits complete collation (apart from Book 10, Niese had only occasionally used this codex).

To sum up, at the end of a meticulous and comprehensive analysis of the relationships of the surviving witnesses between one another, Nodet reaches a surprising conclusion: the group of manuscripts favored by Niese for the first half of *Judean Antiquities* (RO) is to be considered inferior and loses its centrality in the new version of the stemma, while two manuscripts relegated by Niese among the *codices deteriores*, S and P, seem in reality to have preserved the best text of Josephus.

With regard to Books 11–20 of *Judean Antiquities*, the most important authorities upon which Niese based his critical edition are the following (Leoni 2009, 164–165 nn. 72–78):

P	Codex Palatinus (Vaticanus) Graecus 14, parchment, ninth or tenth century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.
F	Codex Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 20, paper, fourteenth century; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.

L	Codex Leidensis (Lugdunensis) 16 J, parchment, eleventh or twelfth century; Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit in Leiden.
A	Codex Ambrosianus (Mediolanensis) F 128 sup. = Gr. 370, parchment, eleventh century; Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.
M	Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 10, paper, 1469; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.
V	Codex Vaticanus Graecus 147, paper, thirteenth or fourteenth century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.
W	Codex Vaticanus Graecus 984, parchment, 1354; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.

These manuscripts fall into two main groups, one formed by PFV, the other by AMW, with L midway between these, siding now with one group, now with the other. Since its appearance, Niese's *editio maior* has been criticized for its excessive reliance on the readings of manuscript P (e.g., Reinach 1893, 123; Schreckenberg 1972, 39). After Niese's, the most interesting contribution to the Greek text has perhaps been the edition prepared by various scholars for the Loeb Classical Library (complete with an English translation), which came out over a considerably long period of time (1930–1965). A certain independence from Niese's main text is proudly announced in the prefatory notes to the volumes of that series (cf. Thackeray 1930, xvii; Marcus, in Thackeray and Marcus 1934, vi; Marcus 1937, viii; Wikgren, in Marcus and Wikgren 1963, vii–viii; Feldman 1965, ix). In a few cases, however, one can perceive a sort of ambiguously eclectic attitude on the part of the Loeb editors; it is not always clear whether a specific reading is adopted with a view to reconstituting the original text of Josephus, or simply to improve the translation (cf. Nodet 1992, xii–xiii).

Given that so far little attention has been paid to the second half of *Judean Antiquities* from a philological viewpoint (with the notable exception of Schreckenberg's studies), the completion of Étienne Nodet's ongoing French project is to be looked forward to with great anticipation. No doubt the latter will throw new light on the manuscript tradition of the last ten books of Josephus's longest writing, possibly revising some of the conclusions reached by Niese and Naber at the end of the nineteenth century.

20.3 *Life*

The Greek text of *Life* has been preserved in six principal manuscripts, partially described by Niese, later re-evaluated by Schreckenberg, and recently analyzed again by the Münster group (Leoni 2009, 167–168 nn. 84–92):

P	Codex Palatinus (Vaticanus) Graecus 14, parchment, ninth or tenth century; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome (in Schreckenberg 1972, 39—followed by successive editors and translators of the <i>Vita</i> , e.g., Pelletier 1983, xxiv; Jossa 1992, 57—this manuscript is mistakenly dated to the early fourteenth century).
B	Codex Bononiensis Graecus 3568, paper, fourteenth or fifteenth century; Biblioteca Universitaria in Bologna (unknown to Niese).
R	Codex Regius (Parisinus) Graecus 1423, parchment, thirteenth or fourteenth century; Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
A	Codex Ambrosianus (Mediolanensis) F 128 sup. = Gr. 370 (erroneously indicated in Niese as “F 128 inf.”), parchment, eleventh century; Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.
M	Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus, Plut. 69, Cod. 10, paper, 1469; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.
W	Codex Vaticanus Graecus 984, parchment, 1354; Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome.

In addition to these manuscripts, Schreckenberg (1972, 13, 16, 28) brought forward as worthy of consideration the Yale Codex (no. 275, paper, written in the Byzantine East in the fourteenth century; Yale University Library, New Haven), which, however, on closer examination turned out to be a descendant of manuscript A. He also drew attention to manuscript B (cf. Siegert 2001, 31–54). The Münster team has worked into its critical apparatus the readings of B, which appears to be a witness of the best tradition and almost always agrees with P (although it was not copied from the latter). Indeed, sometimes B provides further support for P; sometimes it offers a better reading; and

occasionally it even confirms what had previously been unsubstantiated conjectures. It should be noted that both these manuscripts were unknown to Niese. Much less important are other codices, for example, the Codex Vatopedianus (Vatop., no. 386, parchment, dating back to the thirteenth century; Lamberz 1996). As far as the indirect tradition of *Life* is concerned, apart from a few excerpts made in the Byzantine period, we only have a fairly short quotation—although a significant one (*Life* 361–364)—in Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* (3.10.8–11).

The six main manuscripts can be roughly divided into two distinct groups: PB(R) and (A)MW (with R and A being “inconstant members”). Niese’s *editio maior* of *Life*, published in Berlin in 1890, is based on the first group, but essentially on the oldest codex, P. Conversely, in the Teubner edition (containing a faulty *apparatus criticus*), Naber relied quite heavily on the group of manuscripts AMW and he altered it further with unnecessary conjectures. In his 1926 edition for the Loeb Classical Library, Thackeray showed a certain independence from the works of both Niese and Naber. The British scholar respected P, but not to the extreme that Niese had; he preferred a consensus reading of the group PRA (Thackeray 1926, xviii). Thus, he proposed several new readings, taking into consideration the variants of all manuscripts. Thackeray’s Greek text was reproduced in the edition (with a French translation) which André Pelletier published for Les Belles Lettres in 1959 (revised, updated, and enlarged in 1983). The only (minor) differences in Pelletier’s text must be attributed to the latter’s preference for the readings of the manuscript R (1983, xxv). Finally, the most important contribution in recent years is the new edition of *Life* accompanied by a German translation from Münster, which takes a rather eclectic approach to the text (Siegert, Schreckenber, and Vogel 2001). The Münster team provides occasional emendations outside the scope of Niese’s apparatus. It is the first edition to pay attention to the Codex Bononiensis Graecus 3568 (see above).

Life is the only one of Josephus’s works that did not benefit from a Latin translation in late antiquity. This is somewhat surprising (cf. Schreckenber 1992, 76) and particularly unfortunate because elsewhere, above all in the second book of *Against Apion*, the Latin text can be of great help in filling in lacunae of the Greek manuscript tradition. A few (apparently brief) lacunae can be found in *Life* 47, 143, and 411.

20.4 *Against Apion*

In the corpus of Josephus’s works, the text of *Against Apion* is by far the most difficult to reconstruct. The long lacuna in Book 2 (2.51–113), which is common to all the Greek codices, including the oldest one, the Laurentianus (and also including the even more valuable testimony of Eusebius), is perhaps

the most telling example of the precarious state of the manuscript tradition. We must therefore be grateful for the labors of those philologists—especially Niese (1889), Reinach (1930), Schreckenberg (1996a), Labow (2005), and the Münster team (Siegert 2008)—who have made positive progress in this crucial sector of Josephan studies.

While the indirect tradition is of little help in reconstructing the text of the *Life*, in the case of *Apion*, citations found in early Christian authors are of paramount importance, since chronologically they are the closest witnesses to the original. Already in the second and third centuries C.E. some ecclesiastical writers made use of *Against Apion*, which quickly became a model for Christian apologetics (Hardwick 1996). In his *Ad Autolycum* (ca. 180 C.E.), Theophilus of Antioch refers to an important section in Book 1 (93–104; 106–126; 128–154), where Josephus presents evidence for the antiquity of the Judeans from Egyptian, Phoenician, and Chaldean sources. But the largest body of evidence comes from Eusebius (ca. 260/265–339/340 C.E.), who in Books 8–10 of his *Preparation for the Gospel* reproduces, most often literally, more than one-sixth of *Against Apion* (Hardwick 1996, 384–396). Other references are contained in the *Ecclesiastical History* and in the *Chronicle*, available in a sixth-century Armenian version. Although the text of *Apion* used by Eusebius was already corrupt, it is nonetheless older and more reliable than that preserved in all of the direct manuscript evidence. The value of these lengthy citations—already recognized by Niese, Naber, and Reinach—has only been strengthened by the appearance in 1954–1956 of the new critical edition of the *Preparation for the Gospel* by Karl Mras.

The Latin translation of Josephus produced by Cassiodorus's *amici* in the sixth century included also *Against Apion* (see above). This translation is particularly important because it is the only means we have to fill in the great lacuna in the Greek text of Book 2 (2.51–113). Its rather literal character has prompted some attempts at retroversion, in an effort to retrieve the original Greek lying behind the Latin text (Shutt 1987); such attempts, however, are highly speculative and far from convincing. The translation itself is full of gross errors and teems with serious and sometimes ludicrous blunders (see Reinach 1930, x and n. 1). Still, it can be of great help in selecting the best Greek reading, especially because of its early date; the numerous manuscripts that contain it seem to derive from a seventh-century archetype, thus predating the oldest Greek codex by about four centuries. In addition to the excellent critical edition of the whole text published by Boysen (1898), we have another valuable tool, the Latin concordance to the portion missing in Greek compiled by Heinz Schreckenberg (1996b).

Until very recently, a long-standing assumption (originating at least with Niese and if not before) was that the direct manuscript tradition of *Against Apion* had only one single imperfect witness, the Laurentianus, an eleventh-century codex designated L or Λ (Plut. 69, Cod. 22; Biblioteca Medicea

Laurenziana in Florence). The other extant manuscripts were regarded as simple *apographa*, with no independent value, deriving all, either directly or indirectly, from the Laurentianus. The latter is badly corrupt in numerous places and is marred by interpolations, omissions, and all sorts of mistakes. Nonetheless, Niese decided to rely on L for his critical edition of *Against Apion*, often putting more faith in the Florentine manuscript than is warranted. In spite of its faults, the text established by Niese remained undisputed in the succeeding years, even though specific emendations were occasionally proposed by various scholars, e.g., Naber, Thackeray, Reinach, Giangrande, Schreckenberg, Hansen, and Labow (Leoni 2009, 173 nn. 113–116).

The latest major advance is the new assessment of the entire manuscript tradition by the Münster team. Siegert (2008) have for the first time given a comprehensive *editio maior*, based (also for the first time) on a complete stemma of the manuscript evidence in Greek (including Eusebius), Armenian, and Latin. They have also taken full account of the improvement of the text of Eusebius's *Preparation for the Gospel* resulting from the critical edition by Karl Mras. As for the direct evidence, the Münster edition is based on L (see above), E (Eliensis, a fifteenth-century paper codex now in Cambridge, which is related to—but not deriving from—P), and S (Schleusingensis [Hennebergensis] Graecus 1, paper, fifteenth or sixteenth century; Schleusingen, Gymnasialbibliothek). In particular the Schleusingensis should be considered as an independent textual witness (despite its late date: *recentiores non deteriores*), since it appears to belong to a manuscript tradition which is different, at least in part, from that of L (see the *stemma codicum*, in Siegert 2008, 1.76). This codex was used in Arlenius's *editio princeps* (Basel, 1544).

The new light cast by the Münster team on the manuscript tradition of Josephus's last work makes their critical edition the essential reference point for the text of *Against Apion*, serving as a solid basis for both future translations and further research into this very composite treatise.

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FURTHER READING

Despite the overall abundance of bibliographies on Josephus, the studies offering a general introduction to the text of his writings are lamentably few (Leoni 2009, 2007). The two analytical monographs published by Heinz Schreckenberg in 1972 and 1977 cover the entire field painstakingly. Schreckenberg brought up to date and refined the pioneering research work done by Niese and Naber at the end of the nineteenth century (1887–1896).

As far as the *Judean War* is concerned, the necessary starting point is still volume 6 of Josephus's *opera* (Destinon and Niese 1894). Significant details were later clarified and corrected by Schreckenberg (1972). Short but clear overviews are available in the editions of the *Judean War* by Thackeray (1927), Michel and Bauernfeind (1962, 1963, 1969a, 1969b) (in German), Vitucci (1974, in Italian), and Pelletier (1975, in French).

For the text of the *Judean Antiquities*, see Étienne Nodet's groundbreaking *editio minor*, complete with a French translation and a learned commentary: Nodet (1992, 1995, 2001, 2005, and 2010). On Books 1–10, see also Nodet (1987). Niese's *apparatus criticus* remains irreplaceable.

It is especially in relation to the *Life* and *Against Apion* that Niese's edition has progressively lost its importance. The two fundamental editions are now those prepared by the Münster team: Siegert, Schreckenberg and Vogel (2001); Siegert (2008). In English, see the Loeb translation (Thackeray 1926) and the relevant volumes of the *Brill Josephus Project*—Mason (2001); Barclay (2007); in French, see Reinach (1930), Pelletier (1983); in German, Labow (2005); in Italian, Troiani (1977), Jossa (1992), Migliario (1994), and Calabi (2007). From a strictly textual standpoint, all these volumes need revising in light of the work carried out by the Münster team (Siegert 2008).

CHAPTER 21

The Ancient Latin Translations of Josephus

David B. Levenson and Thomas R. Martin

21.1 Introduction

Scholars agree both that the ancient Latin translations of Josephus are immensely important and, except for *Against Apion* and the first five books of *Jewish Antiquities*, virtually inaccessible. Their important witness to the Greek textual tradition is widely acknowledged (Schreckenberg 1972, 59–61; Lembi 2005). Their cultural importance, however, is less appreciated: it was only through the Latin versions that Christians in the West (and even some Jews like the author of *Sefer Yosippon*; see [Chapter 25](#) by Dönitz in this volume), from Late Antiquity to the appearance of the first vernacular translations in the fifteenth century, knew the historian’s writings and the traditions associated with them (Kletter 2005, 2013; Vincent 2013 provide examples from medieval England; for the European medieval reception of Josephus, see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). The inaccessibility of the Latin translations is a difficult problem. In the past century, three attempts have been undertaken to produce complete modern critical editions of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*. The first stalled after the publication of the *Against Apion* (Boysen 1898). From the second, we have only a programmatic essay (Ussani 1945). The third, entitled *Latin Josephus I*, includes only *Jewish Antiquities* 1–5 (Blatt 1958).

In the absence of critical texts of *Jewish Antiquities* 6–20 and *Jewish War*, readers have often been advised to consult the 1524 Basel edition (Niese and Destinon 1885–1895, vol. 1, lviii; Schreckenberg 1972, 59). Bulhart (1953) and Blatt (1958, 22–23), however, provide extensive documentation of places where this edition does not have the correct reading. In fact, as will be explained below, the 1524 Basel edition has a very narrow textual base representing traditions with numerous inferior readings.

Since the most urgent question relating to the Latin translations concerns the lack of a critical edition and the availability of any convenient text for *Jewish War* and most of *Jewish Antiquities*, this chapter focuses on the manuscript tradition for *Jewish War* and the second half of *Jewish Antiquities*. The rich tradition of Josephus in Latin includes at least 230 manuscripts, a number fitting what James O’Donnell calls “the single most copied historical work of

the middle ages” (1979, 246). We report in this chapter the preliminary results of our analysis of parts of 108 manuscripts to help readers use the resources that are currently available. These results are presented in the following: [Figure 21.1](#) provides a provisional classification of manuscript groups, taking into account, but at points correcting, Blatt’s pioneering work; [Figure 21.2](#) gives a sample passage with readings from 74 manuscripts, and this is followed by [Figure 21.3](#), a brief commentary illustrating how the textual tradition can be analyzed; and [Figures 21.4](#) and [21.5](#) list the manuscripts we have studied, 45 of which are, at the time of writing, available online. First, however, we present background information on the translations and on the fundamental work of three modern scholars.

A	War	1. [Vat1992 Bern183 Plut.66.7] [Rouen1126 BN5057] hr 2. Non W Bam80
B	War	1. Bam79 Bo BN5058 BN5058A BN1615 2. Reg944
C	Ant. 11 Ant. 13 Ant. 14 Ant. 18/20 War	[(C La) V (M l) Sr Vi Pet par] [Ne pa Plut18sin10] Sa hr Fl [C La V M l Cr Sr Vi par] [Ne Plut18sin10 pa Fl] [(C La) V (M l) Cr Sr Vi par] [Ne Plut18sin10 pa Fl] [L (Cr Plut18sin10) (M l)] [C V Ga (Ne pa) par pat Vi Sr] Bo Fl (Sr missing Ant. 18.63-64) Ne pa
D	Ant. 11	[Lc He] [Ba L] F S Mi W Vo E VI ¹ Z Aus
E	Ant. 11 Ant. 13 Ant. 14 Ant. 18/20 War	[Pl Prs] [Vct Cl Nv VI ² al] Mt [Cl Nv al] [L Bo] Aus hr 1. [Ba L] [Cl Nv al] Bo 2. Prs p 1. [S a Vo f] [Pl Prs (only for Ant. 18)] [Vct Sg] cl 2. Cl Nv al Id 3. Mt s Co BN5059 4. Prs p (only for Ant. 20) 1. Pl Prs cl Vct n Sg Ld d BH836 2. Mt s Co BN5059
F	War	StG627 Eins345 BL39645
G	Ant./ War	St Lau [Werd Best7010] D
H	Ant. 11 Ant. 13 Ant. 14 War	El Ha Cor Cb Pa h Ba El Ha Cor Cp El Ha Cor Cb Ha El Cor Cb
J	Ant. 11 Ant. 13 Ant. 14 Ant. 18/20 War	[n d] Ca Alb Du Mir li Id Cov 1. [n Id Cb d] [U Ca Alb Du Mir li Cov] 2. [Prs p] [Pa h] U [n d] Alb Du Pa h Id Cp Cov [U (Alb Ar) n Du Mir li Id d Cov] Ch [Alb Ar li Id] U Du [Pa h] Burn325 Cov
K	War	1. Plut19sin2 DresdenA111 Plut.66.8 Plut.66.9 2. Plut19sin4 BN16032
L	Ant. 11 Ant. 13 Ant. 14 Ant. 18/20 War	1. b Sa Sch t 2. Cn Adm Lamp z Sec Vn Cn Adm Lamp z Sec Sa Pd Vn b Sa Sch t Cn Adm Lamp z cr Sa Vn Crem b Sa Sch t [Cn Vn] [(Adm cr Crem) Lamp z] [b Sa Sch t] 1. Clm 22004 Sa Sch 2. [(Cn Vn) Adm Lamp z cr Wien353 Crem] Pd

Figure 21.1 Classification of manuscript groups

Cum neque iratus, neque miserans eam quisquam uellet interficere, sed uictum quidem patrandu aliis laborabat undique autem adempta iam erat ei etiam reperendi facultas famesque uisceribus et medullis irrepserat. Plus uero quam fames iracundia succedebat. Igitur impetu animi ac necessitate impulsoribus aduersus naturam excitatur.

cum] sed cum grC; cum uero hr. **neque...neque]** nec...nec hr. **miserans]** miseratus Plut.66.7. **quisquam]** quisque Pd. **interficere]** occidere "not after 1475" ed. **sed]** omitted by grC. **quidem]** quidam Pl, Prs. **parando]** grB, grE, grJ, grL (Sa: patrandu). Cp, EddI; prestando hr. **patrandu aliis]** aliis patrandu BN16032; aliis parando EddI. **laborabat]** parabat grF, grH, grK1, grL2. Mi, p. "not after 1475" ed. Eddv. **autem]** omitted by BL39645. **adempta]** adepta BN5058A, 1475Rome. **autem adempta]** adempta autem Cp. **iam]** omitted by Cb. **adempta iam]** iam adempta, Vat1992, Plut.66.7, 1475Rome (adepta iam). **erat]** deerat grE. **iam erat]** erat iam K2, Ar. **ei]** omitted by Cp, Vat1992, Plut.66.7, 1475Rome. **iam erat ei etiam]** erat ei iam etiam EddI; etiam iam deerat ei grE1. **famesque]** famesque eius Cor. **uisceribus]** uisceribus eius Cp. **irresperat]** ereperat Alb, Ar, Id, li, 1475Lübeck; inheserat hr. **plus uero]** et plus eam Pd. **quam fames iracundia]** iracundia quam fames grE1 Pd. **succedebat]** succederat Sa.; succedebat Sch. **Impetu]** ui DresdenA1111, Eddv. **Impetu animi]** animi impetu grE1. **ac]** et 1470Aug; de p; ex grC. **necessitate]** necessitatis grG, grH, Bur325, Cp, grL1, 1470Aug, "not after 1475" ed.; necessitas Plut.19sin.4. **impulsoribus]** impulsa rebus grE, grF, grG, grH, grJ, grK, Cp, p, Sa, 1470Aug, "not after 1475" ed., EddI, Eddv; rebus impulsa Bo; impulsa Ba79, Mi; impulso grC. **aduersus]** aduersis DresdenA1111, 1480Verona; aduersis contra grE, grJ [Cov; aduersus contra; Burn325; aduersus], Cp, EddI. 1513Milan, 1524Col, 1524Basel; aduersus contra Cov. **excitatur]** incitatur grC, hr.

Figure 21.2 A sample passage with readings from seventy-four manuscripts.

Greek text of War 6.201	Translation of Greek	Latin text of War 6.201	Translation of Latin	Translation of Latin War 6.201 (Latin text in Chart 2)	Rafanov's translation of Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 3.6.23 (ed. Schwartz and Monceaux, 2/1, 200)	Pseudo-Hieronymus 5.10.1 (ed. V. Ussani, 382)
ὡς δ' οὐτε παραδυναμένης τις αὐτῇ λείπον σπέρη δαίμον, καὶ τὸ μὲν σπέρμα ἐν σπέρματι ἀλλήλων ἐκαστοῦ ἐν ὅσσοις ἦν ἤθη καὶ τὸ εὐρεῖν, ὁ λυγρὸς δὲ δαίμων ἐκείνου ἐνταῦθα ἐξέσπρε καὶ τοὺς λυγροὺς ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, σφόδρα οὖν θυμὸς λαφροῦς τὴν ὀργὴν μετὰ τῆς ἀνέγκης αὐτῇ τὴν φθῆν ἐξέσπρε.	Since no one either being enraged or pitying her, killed her, and she was becoming weary of finding some food for others, moreover from everywhere even finding it was now impossible, and the famine was moving through her guts and her marrow, and, more than the famine, her passions were inflaming her, taking as a counselor anger together with necessity, she moved against nature.	Cum neque iratus, neque miserans eam quisquam uellet interficere, sed uictum quidem patrandu aliis laborabat undique autem adempta iam erat ei etiam reperendi facultas famesque uisceribus et medullis irrepserat, plus uero quam fames iracundia succedebat, igitur impetu animi ac necessitate impulsoribus aduersus naturam excitatur.	Since no one, either being enraged or having pity, was willing to kill her, but indeed she by obtaining nourishment for others was becoming weary, moreover from everywhere the capability of even finding it had now been taken away from her, and the famine had crept into her guts and marrow, but even more than the famine, rage was inflaming her, consequently with vehemence of spirit and also necessity as incitators, she was moved against nature.	Since no one, either being enraged or having pity, was willing to kill her, but indeed she by obtaining nourishment for others was becoming weary, moreover from everywhere the capability of even finding it had now been taken away from her, and the famine had crept into her guts and marrow, but even more than the famine, rage was inflaming her, consequently with vehemence of spirit and also necessity as incitators, she was moved against nature.	But since no one, either being angered or taking pity, slew her, and if by chance some food had been sought out by her, it was being sought out for others, nor now was there anywhere a means of discovering it, but a dire famine was pressing hard on her very guts and marrow, and the lack of food was now pushing her hard to fury, using famine and anger as the worst advisors, she was now armed against the very laws of nature.	Strange hunger poured itself into her innermost marrow, irritated her humors, disturbed her mind. The woman had a small infant whom she had borne. Annoyed by its crying, she who saw herself and the tiny one wadding away, conquered by such great enormities and unequal to such a fierce calamity, took leave of her senses and with the exercise of parental care obliterated, she swallowed her grief, she took up madness.

Figure 21.3 Comparison of texts of Jewish War

<i>Signum</i>	<i>Location: Library</i>	<i>Manuscript</i>	<i>Blatt No. & Foliation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Contents</i>	
a	Milan: Bibl. Ambrosiana	A.220	47	λ	9 ^o (1*)	<i>Ant.</i> 17–20
Adm	Admont: Benediktinerstift	71/72	84	ρ	12 ^a	71: <i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> pref.; <i>Ant.</i> 13; 72: <i>Ant.</i> 14–20; <i>War</i>
al	London: British Library	Add. 22859/22860	74	ε	13 ^a	22859: <i>Ant.</i> 1–11; 22860: <i>Ant.</i> 12–20
Alb	London: British Library	Royal 13 D vj/vii	163	ω	12 ^a (1*)	vi: <i>Ant.</i> 1–14; vii: <i>Ant.</i> 15–20; <i>War</i>
Ar	London: British Library	Arundel 94	170	ω	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 15–20; <i>War</i>
Aus	Vienna: Austria Capitulare	162	132	φ	14 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
b	Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 4510*	87	ρ	13 ^a (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
Ba	Bamberg: Staatsbibliothek	Msc. Class 78*	113	φ	9 ^o (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
Bo	Oxford: Bodleian Library	Canon. petr. lat. 148	4	α	1145	<i>Ant.</i> 12–22; <i>Apion</i> ; <i>War</i>
C	Montecassino: Bibl. monasteriale di Montecassino	124	10	β	10 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
Ca	Cambridge: Univ. Library	Cambridge Dd 1.4	157	ω	1110–1120	<i>Ant.</i> 1.68–14
Cb	London: British Library	Add. 16280	121	φ	13 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Cl	Troyes: Madiarbaques	137*	100	σ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
cl	Troyes: Madiarbaques	201*	62	υ	12 ^a	<i>War</i> 1–7 [1–9], <i>Ant.</i> 18–20 [20,21,20]
Cn	Klosterneuburg: Stiftsbibliothek	5	106	σ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Co	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5016	65	ν	12 ^a /13 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> ; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20
Coe	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 16730*	123	φ	1170–1180	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Cow	London: British Library	Harley 5116	168	ω	14 ^a (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Cp	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 16941	73	ε	1200–1230	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
cz	Heiligenkreuz: Stiftsbibliothek	34	140	φ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 14–20; <i>War</i>
Cr	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plut.19.in.01*	17	ε	11 ^a /12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20 (missing 11.148–347); <i>Apion</i>
Crem	Kremsmünster: Stiftsbibliothek	350	90	ρ	14 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 14–20; <i>War</i>
D	Cologne: Dörmann- und Dombibliothek	163/163*	107	σ	12 ^a (3 rd quarter)	163: <i>Ant.</i> 1–4, 8–13; 163: <i>Ant.</i> 14–20; <i>War</i>
d	New York: Pierpont Morgan Library	M 533/M 534	68	ν	13 ^a (late)	533: <i>Ant.</i> 1–15; 534: <i>Ant.</i> 16–20; <i>War</i>
Du	Durham: Cathedral Library	B.II.1	160	ω	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
E	Einsiedeln: Stiftsbibliothek	344	35	ι	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12
El	Valenciennes: Bibl. municipale	546	115	φ	11 ^a /12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
f	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5763*	44	λ	11 ^a (end)	<i>Ant.</i> 17–20
F	Bern: Burgerbibliothek	118	43	λ	9 ^o (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12
Fl	London: British Library	Harley 3699	31	ε	1478	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Apion</i>
Ga	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plat.89.inl.11*	27	η	11 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 17–20
h	London: British Library	Harley 4961/4962/4963	109	σ	15 ^a	4961: <i>Ant.</i> 8–13; 4962: <i>Ant.</i> 14–20; <i>Apion</i> 4963: <i>War</i> 1–7 (21–27)
Ha	Valenciennes: Bibl. municipale	547*	116	φ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
He	Würzburg: Universitätsbibliothek	Ms.p.th.15*	45	λ	9 ^o (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 7–12, 399
hr	London: British Library	Harley 3691	40	α	1457	<i>Ant.</i> 1–16; <i>War</i> 1.552–2.373; 5.365 (end of 7 [17–22, abridged]; <i>Ug.</i>
I	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plut. 66.3*	18	α	15 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Apion</i>
L	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plat. 66.2 *	3	α	11 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Apion</i> ; <i>War</i> 1.1–276
La	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plat. 66.1*	11	β	11 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–16; <i>Ug.</i>
Lamp	Graz: Universitätsbibliothek	Graz.105	85	ρ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Lau	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plat. 66.5/6*	149	χ	11 ^a (end)	66.5: <i>Ant.</i> 1–28.3; 66.6: <i>Ant.</i> 18–20; <i>War</i>
Le	Rome: Bibl. Vaticana	Pal. lat. 814*	46	λ	8 ^a (end)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12
ld	London: British Library	Royal 13 E.viii	166	α	13 ^a (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Ld	London: British Library	Add. 22861	66	ν	13 ^a	<i>War</i> 1–7 [1–8]; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20 [9–11]
li	Lincoln: Cathedral Library	Lincoln 145 (C.1.6)	161	α	12 ^a (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20 (many lacunae); <i>War</i>
M	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	San Marco 385*	16	ε	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Apion</i> 1

MI	Bern: Burgerbibliothek	Lat. 50	50	λ	9 ^a (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> 1–7 [13–18, 18]
Mir	Winchester: Winchester College Library	ms. 6	165	ν	12 ^a (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
Mr	Oxford: Merton College	Merton 317	101	σ	12 ^a (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> 1–2; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20, <i>War</i> 3–7; <i>Ant.</i> 14–17
n	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 16731*	71	ξ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Nc	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5045*	29	ζ	12 ^a (early)	Vol. 1: <i>Ant.</i> 1–12; Vol. 2: <i>Ant.</i> 13–20; <i>War</i> 1 (part); <i>War</i> 4–7 (Lat. 5–7; part) [21–24]
Non	Cologne: Fondation Martin Bodmer	Bodmer 98/99*	48	κ	9 ^a (early)	98: <i>Ant.</i> 1–6 99: <i>War</i> 1–7 [13–19]
Nv	London: British Library	Harley 3883	72	ξ	12 ^a (late)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
p	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5047*	103	ο	12 ^b /13 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Pa	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5049	128	φ	12 ^b /13 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i> ; <i>Apion</i>
pa	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5056*	30	ζ	13 ^a /14 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i> 1 (part); <i>War</i> 4–7 (Lat. 5–7; part) [21–24]
par	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5051*	22	γ	15 ^a (1 ^a)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
pat	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 8835	25	γ	1461	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
Pd	Stockholm: Kungliga Biblioteket	A 148 ("Codex Gigas")*	93	ρ	120 ^a –1230	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Pa	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5054*	7	α	14 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–11; <i>Apion</i>
Pf	Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 11302*	81	π	11 ^a /12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> 1–7 [13–19]; <i>Ant.</i> 18 (not numbered)
Pvs	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 8938*	99	σ	c. 1160	<i>Ant.</i> 1–17; <i>War</i> 1–7 [18–24]; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20; <i>Ant.</i> 13–17 and <i>Ant.</i> 19–20 from a textual tradition different from other books
s	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 12511	59	ν	12 ^b (2 ^a)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> ; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20
S	Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek	GKS 157 folio	41	λ	9 ^a (1 ^a)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; 17–20
Sa	Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 15811	89	ρ	c. 1200	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i> ; <i>Hgg</i>
Sch	Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 17404*	88	μ	13 ^a (mid)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i> ; <i>Hgg</i>
Sec	Graz: Universitätsbibliothek	132	86	μ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> prologue; <i>Ant.</i> 13
Sg	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 11735	67	υ	13 ^a (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> 1–7 [13–19]; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20
Sr	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 15427	20	γ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20 (missing 18.63–64)
St	Brussels: Bibl. royale	II 1179	144	χ	11 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
t	Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 18001*	92	ρ	15 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 10–20
U	Paris: Bibl. nationale	NAT. 2453	154	ω	12 ^a (early)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
V	Rome: Bibl. Vaticana	Vat. Lat. 1998	14	γ	11 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Hgg</i>
Vet	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 14361	60	υ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; <i>War</i> 1–7 [13–19]; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20 [20, 21, 20]
Vi	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5048	5	α	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20
VI	New York: Columbia Library	Plimpton 43	80	α	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12
Vu	Vienne: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek	Palatinus Lat. 353	91	ρ	14 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Vo	Leiden: Universiteit Leiden	VLF 17	49	λ	10 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12; 17–20; <i>Hgg</i>
W	Welfenschatz: Herzog August Bibliothek	Codex Guelf. 22/23 Weissenburg*	34	ι	9 ^a (2 ^a)	22: <i>Ant.</i> 1–12; 23: <i>War</i>
Wend	Berlin: Staatsbibliothek	Lat. Fol. 226	146	χ	12 ^a (before 1159)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
x	Zweil: Stabsbibliothek	25	94	μ	12 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
Z	Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek	Cod. hist. fol. 418*	37	ι	1160–1170	<i>Ant.</i> 1–12
Blatt only lists War	Paris: Bibl. nationale	Lat. 5059*			14 ^a	<i>War</i> ; <i>Ant.</i> 18–20
not in Blatt	Cologne: Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln	Best 7010 (Wallraf 276)*			12 ^a (end)	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>War</i>
not in Blatt	Florence: Bibl. Laurenziana	Plut. 18.1n.10 ^a			15 ^a	<i>Ant.</i> 1–20; <i>Apion</i>

Notes: Listed in alphabetical order of Blatt's sigla. Dates according to recent catalogues, often correcting Blatt and Niese. Asterisk = manuscript is online at library site. Brackets = the numbering of the books in the manuscript. 1st or 2nd after a date = first or second folio of a century. See Figure 21.1 for Leonardo-Martin groups (sometimes differing from Blatt's families).

Figure 21.4 Collated manuscripts including *Jewish Antiquities*

<i>Location: Library</i>	<i>Manuscript</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Levenson-Martin Group</i>
Bamberg: Staatsbibliothek Bamberg	Msc. Class. 79. E. III 16*	10 th	<i>War</i>	B
Bamberg: Staatsbibliothek Bamberg	Msc. Class. 80. E. III 17*	10 th /11 th	<i>War</i>	A
Bern: Burgerbibliothek Bern	183	938–1004	<i>War</i>	A
Dresden: Sächsischen Landesbibliothek Staats und Universitätsbibliothek	A 111*	1438	<i>War</i> ; <i>Apion</i>	K
Einsiedeln: Stiftsbibliothek	345	12 th	<i>War</i>	F
Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut. 66.7*	15 th	<i>War</i> ; <i>Apion</i>	A
Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut. 66.8*	15 th	<i>War</i>	K
Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut. 66.9*	15 th	<i>War</i>	K
Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut.19sin.02*	1401–1410	<i>War</i>	K
Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut.19sin.04*	1455	<i>War</i> ; <i>Apion</i>	K
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France	Lat. 16032*	1479	<i>War</i>	K
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France	Lat. 5057*	12 th	<i>War</i>	A
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France	Lat. 5058	11 th (late)	<i>War</i>	B
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France	Lat. 5058A*	12 th	<i>War</i>	B
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France	Lat. 1615*	14 th	<i>War</i> ; <i>Apion</i>	B
London: British Library	Burney 325	13 th	<i>War</i>	J
London: British Library	Add. 39645	12 th /13 th	<i>War</i> 1–7 [1–8 corr. to 1–7]	F
Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Clm 22004	1175–1180	<i>War</i>	L
Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Vat. lat. 1992	10 th	<i>War</i>	A
Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Reg. lat. 944	12 th	<i>War</i>	B
Rouen: Bibliothèque François Villon	1126	12 th	<i>War</i>	A
St. Gallen: Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen	627*	9 th	<i>War</i>	F
Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, Biblioteca Històrica	836*	c. 1475	<i>War</i>	E
Vienna: Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek	Palatinus 353	14 th	<i>War</i>	L

Figure 21.5 Collated manuscripts with *Jewish War* and not including *Jewish Antiquities*

21.2 The Latin Translations

Our knowledge of the circumstances of the translations of *Jewish Antiquities*, *Against Apion*, and *Jewish War* (there is no ancient Latin translation of *Life*) derives entirely from a passage in Cassiodorus's *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*:

Josephus (almost a second Livy) ... composed his books of *Jewish Antiquities* on a large scale. Father Jerome writing to Lucinus Betticus says that he was not able to translate Josephus because of the size of this prolix work [*Epist.* 71.5]. But I have had him translated into Latin in twenty-two books by my friends, a task involving great labour on their part since he is subtle and complex. He also wrote seven other marvelously clear books on the *Jewish Captivity*. Some ascribe the translation of this work to Jerome, others to Ambrose, still others to Rufinus. The fact that this translation is ascribed to such men declares the special merits of its composition.

(Halporn 2003, 149–150)

Here we have explicit evidence that *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, referred to collectively as the twenty-two books of *Jewish Antiquities*, were translated at the Vivarium, Cassiodorus's monastery school, in the middle of the sixth century (Leoni 2007, 481–483; Flusser 1959, 459, and 1974, 130–131, suggests a date of 576 C.E. on the basis of a passage in *Sefer Yosippon*; see Chaptet 20 by Leoni in this volume). The information about the translation of *Jewish War* is less explicit. Some have suggested Cassiodorus has in mind the work conventionally called Pseudo-Hegesippus, a Christian adaptation of *Jewish War* (with some material from *Jewish Antiquities*), written around 375 C.E. (Leoni 2007, 483–485; on Pseudo- Hegesippus, see also [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). The reference to seven books, however, points to the translation of *Jewish War*, since Pseudo-Hegesippus has only five. Nevertheless, the possibility that Cassiodorus is referring to the seven books of the Greek *Jewish War* perhaps cannot be completely ruled out (for the debate, see Ussani 1945, 94; Feldman 1984, 45–46; Leoni 2007, 483 n. 15). No ancient lists of the works of Ambrose, Jerome, or Rufinus mention a translation of *Jewish War*. Since Pseudo-Hegesippus was frequently attributed to Ambrose and Jerome says he did not translate Josephus, some have thought Rufinus, who translated a large number of works from Greek into Latin, produced the translation.

We, however, have not been able to find evidence of the attribution to Rufinus before the fifteenth century. Giuliana Ussani's reference (1945, 95 n. 6) to Rufinus as translator in three twelfth-century manuscripts is mistaken (we have not had access to the fourteenth-century BN5060 she cites). Two notices we have found attributing the translation to Rufinus in the twelfth-century manuscript Berlin Lat. 226 are in a hand similar to a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century hand found elsewhere in the manuscript (Stüwer 1969, 166). Of the manuscripts we have seen, fifteenth-century attributions to Rufinus appear in

three manuscripts in the Laurentian Library in Florence: Plut. 66.3 (*Ant./Apion*), Plut. 66.4 (*Ant./Apion*), and Plut. 66.8 (*War*). Rufinus is also named as the translator of both *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War* in the 1481 Venice and all subsequent early editions. Libraries continue to identify Rufinus as the translator (sometimes with a question mark) in catalogues listing Latin editions and manuscripts of both *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*. However, Gennadius, writing in the mid-fifth century, does not list Josephus among the authors whom Rufinus translated (*De vir. ill.* 17). More significantly, there are striking differences between the translation in the Latin *Jewish War* and the translations Rufinus made from the same passages of *Jewish War* quoted in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (see the example below), as Giuliana Ussani has demonstrated (1945, 94–102) and as we have confirmed based on a larger sample. There is no longer any reason, therefore, to attribute the Latin translation of *Jewish War* to Rufinus.

Although the translator of *Jewish War* is unknown, the reference in Cassiodorus apparently places the translation considerably before his time. A fourth- or fifth-century date seems the best guess, absent any scholarship on the Latinity of the translation, research that will, of course, depend on having at least a provisional critical text.

In addition to being able to read Josephus in the translation of *Jewish War* and in the Cassiodoran translation of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, Christian and, in some cases, Jewish Latin readers were exposed to a significant amount of Josephan material through two other works: Rufinus's translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and the above-mentioned Pseudo-Hegesippus. Much remains to be done comparing these and other versions of Josephus (e.g., Syriac and Slavonic; see [Chapter 26](#) by Leeming in this volume). Here it is sufficient to note that the only connection of these three Latin versions we have found is the Cassiodoran translators' use of Rufinus's translation for the *Testimonium Flavianum* (*Ant.* 18.63–4), the account of John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119), and two other passages (*Hist. eccl.* 1.8.6–8 [*Ant.* 17.168–170] and *Hist. eccl.* 1.10.5 [*Ant.* 18.34–35]). Alice Whealey (2003, 34–36) first noted the use of Rufinus for the *Testimonium* and the account of John the Baptist, and we have confirmed it by the analysis of our critical texts of the Latin translation of *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63–64, 18.116–119, and 20.199–203 (the death of James) and of Rufinus's translation of the *Testimonium* and the passage on John the Baptist in *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11.4–8 (Levenson and Martin 2014; on the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). Our texts of the passages from Rufinus supersede the text in Mommsen's edition of Rufinus, which is based on only three or four manuscripts (we report variants from fifteen manuscripts), and is not and was never intended to be a full critical edition, but simply an aid to establishing the Greek text of Schwartz (Ciccolini 2012).

21.3 The Modern Study of the Latin Translations of Josephus's Works

21.3.1 *Benedikt Niese's editio maior (1885–1895)*

Although a number of Latin editions of *Jewish War*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Against Apion* were published between 1470 and the nineteenth century (Schreckenberg 1968, 1–67; see below for 1470–1528 editions), none was based on more than a few (unnamed) manuscripts. It is the introductions to volumes 1, 3, 5, and 6 in the Niese *editio maior* (*Jewish War* is co-edited with J. Destinon) and the citation of “Lat” in the apparatus in each volume that mark the beginning of modern academic study of the Latin translations of Josephus's works. In fact, with the exception of the first five books of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, all twentieth-century editions of Josephus and, as far as we can tell, all scholarship since the publication of the Niese *editio maior* depend on this edition (or in a few cases on the 1524 Basel edition) for information about the Latin translations of *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*.

In addition to the 1524 Basel edition, which he calls “*editio...omnium et nitidissima et optima*” (vol. 1, lxx; cf. vol. 1, lviii), Niese says he used a number of manuscripts (we give the Blatt number and the current name and dates from the most recent catalogues, correcting Niese and Blatt at several points):

For *Jewish Antiquities* (Niese vol. 1, xxviii–xxix; vol. 3, xiv):

1. Cimelio 1 (Blatt #1). Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana (S.P.11/1), sixth-century papyrus; *Jewish Antiquities* 5.334–10.204 (with gaps and unreadable parts). Unfortunately, this text has never been published, nor has the eighteenth-century transcription (Bibl. Ambr. G 149 suss.) attributed to Giulio Cesare Della Croce, but probably by Felice Monti (Airoldi 1994), which, according to Blatt (1958, 27), is helpful in preserving currently illegible sections.
2. Guelf. 22 Weissenburg (Blatt #34). Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, ninth century; *Jewish Antiquities* 1–12. Digitized at Wolfenbüttel Digitale Bibliothek.
3. Cod. 118 (Blatt #44). Bern, Burgerbibliothek Bern, early ninth century; *Jewish Antiquities* 1–12.
4. V F 34 (Blatt #2). Naples, Biblioteca nazionale di Napoli, tenth century; *Jewish Antiquities* 1.24–16.379, Pseudo-Hegesippus.
5. Plut. 66.1 (Blatt #11). Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana, eleventh century; *Jewish Antiquities*. 1–16, Pseudo-Hegesippus.

6. A.220 inf (Blatt #47). Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ninth century (1st half); *Jewish Antiquities* 17–20. This apparently is the manuscript Niese calls A.122 and dates to the tenth century.
7. Canon. patr. lat. 148 (Blatt #4). Oxford, Bodleian Library. 1145 C.E.; *Jewish Antiquities* 12–20, *Against Apion*, *Jewish War*.

Jewish War (Niese vol. 6, xx–xxi):

1. Vat. Lat. 1992. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, tenth/eleventh century; *Jewish War*.
2. Ms. Lat. fol. 226 (Blatt #146). Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, twelfth century (before 1159 C.E.); *Jewish Antiquities* 1–20, *Jewish War*. Niese uses this also for the second part of the *Jewish Antiquities*. Not available online, but three closely related eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts are (see [Figure 21.1](#), G).

The Niese edition cites “Lat” throughout its apparatus, sometimes simply adding Lat to support Greek readings, sometimes printing a few words, and sometimes quoting a long phrase or even complete sentence, especially in cases where an emendation is based on a Latin reading. The greatest problem with its use of the Latin evidence is the exceptionally narrow choice of manuscripts, depending on only seven of the (at least) 174 manuscripts containing *Jewish Antiquities* and two of the (at least) 146 manuscripts containing *Jewish War*. A further weakness is the lack (with very few exceptions) of citations of manuscripts used for particular readings or of textual variants in the Latin tradition. The following example, taken from the famous story of a mother’s cannibalism in *Jewish War* Book 6, illustrates the inadequacy of the *editio maior* apparatus both as a record of the Latin tradition and as a tool for using the Latin in reconstructing the Greek.

For the name of Maria’s hometown in *Jewish War* 6.201, Niese and Destinon print 00392ηθεζουβῶ, based only on L, and list six Greek variants from Greek *Jewish War* manuscripts, variants from Eusebius, John Chrysostom, and the Syriac translation, a conjecture of Hudson in his 1726 edition (00392ηθεζῶβ), and the Lat “*uatezoba* aut *uatezobra*.” In the seventy-four manuscripts we have collated for *Jewish War* and all editions through 1524, *vatezoba* is not attested, with *vatezobra* appearing in the vast majority of texts and editions. The reading *bet(h)azob*, however, found in fifteen Latin manuscripts, would support Hudson’s conjecture (based partially on Rufinus’ *bethezob* not mentioned by Niese), and is close to the reading Niese and Destinon print based on only one Greek manuscript.

While the Latin evidence in the apparatus to Niese’s *editio maior* is inadequate and can be enhanced by working with manuscripts now available

online (see below), the Prefaces in this edition provide surveys of the translators' tendencies that have not been superseded (Niese vol. 1, liii–lv; vol. 3, xxxviii–xxxix; vol. 6, lvi–lvii), although they can now be supplemented by the observations of Boysen (1898, xlii–xliii), Giuliana Ussani (1945, 90–93), Lundström (1955), and Blatt (1958, 20–22). Niese's discussion of the relationship of the Latin translations to the streams of the Greek manuscript tradition also remains fundamental (vol. 1, lv–lviii; vol. 3, xxxix–xlii; vol. 5, xix–xxiii; vol. 6, lvii–lx). Aside from Niese, only Boysen's work on *Against Apion* (1898, xxxiv–xli) and the observations of Nodet on the first half of *Jewish Antiquities* (1987) offer more than isolated comments on this question. Further progress will have to await a critical edition, or at least a collection of variants going far beyond Niese's apparatus.

21.3.2 Karl Boysen's *Against Apion* (1898)

Nine years after the publication of Niese's edition of *Against Apion* in his *editio maior* and *editio minor*, Karl Boysen produced a model edition of this text, intended to be the first contribution (designated Pars VI) to a complete edition of the Cassiodoran translation comprising volume 37 of the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* series. Boysen comments on twenty-six manuscripts in his Preface, on the basis of which he creates a stemma, which leads him to depend in his apparatus primarily on seven manuscripts. Boysen offers a much fuller apparatus than that in vol. 5 of Niese's *editio maior*, which only cites Lat for the section of *Against Apion* extant in Greek and a limited number of Latin manuscripts in the apparatus to *Against Apion* 2.52–113, where the Greek text has been lost. Boysen's apparatus also includes a number of readings Niese suggested to him in private communications. Because most of the Latin manuscripts of *Against Apion* also contain *Jewish Antiquities* and because the same translators were responsible for *Against Apion* as for *Jewish Antiquities*, Boysen's careful analysis both of the manuscript tradition (xi–xxxiv) and of the translation techniques in *Against Apion* (xlii–xliii) is also relevant for *Jewish Antiquities*, for which he also produced a study of the manuscript tradition based on probes from Books 6–10 (Boysen 1903).

Boysen's edition is the basis for the abbreviated apparatus in the new edition of *Against Apion*, edited by Siegert (2008); the Latin text of *Against Apion* 2.52–113 printed at the end of the second volume is taken from Niese. Schreckenberg's concordance to the Latin of *Against Apion* (1996) includes material from the apparatuses of Boysen and Niese as well as conjectures from Naber (1896), Reinach (1930), and Thackeray (vol. 1; 1926).

21.3.3 Franz Blatt's Jewish Antiquities 1–5 (1958)

The last major study of the Latin translations of Josephus is Franz Blatt's 1958 edition of *Jewish Antiquities* Books 1–5. Blatt's apparatus, stemma, and even collations have been severely criticized (Flusser 1959; Lundström 1959; Browning 1960; Willis 1961; Fontaine 1960 offers a more generous assessment). But even his severest critics recognize the great value of his catalogue of 171 *Jewish Antiquities* manuscripts (many of which also have *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*) and twenty "Extracts," "Fragments of Lost Manuscripts," and "Codices Mixti" (many more manuscripts could be added in each of these three categories). His description of each manuscript and comments on selected passages in each provide the basis for all future work. In addition to his descriptions of the 171 manuscripts of the *Jewish Antiquities*, Blatt lists fifty-five manuscripts containing only *Jewish War*.

While an invaluable resource, Blatt's descriptions of the manuscripts need to be corrected and updated in a number of places. For example, the Berlin manuscripts he locates at Tübingen are now all back in Berlin; the two parts of an important ninth-century manuscript (Bodmer 98 and 99), which Blatt places in London, are now in the Bodmer Library in Cologny, Switzerland. The contents of some manuscripts are described inaccurately, and his dates for a number of manuscripts do not correspond to the dates in the most recent catalogues. In the course of his descriptions of the manuscripts, he offers a number of criteria for his classification of the manuscripts into eighteen families, such as the widely different forms of the Greek quotation from the *Iliad* (*Ant.* 19.92) and the lacuna in many manuscripts at *Jewish Antiquities* 20.26–38. There remain a number of families with an excessively large and undifferentiated number of manuscripts, especially in the "Contaminated Northern Group" (Blatt 1958, 67–94).

21.4 Latin Manuscripts of *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*

The manuscripts of Josephus exhibit a variety of combinations of the individual works. For example, manuscripts of *Jewish War* are found containing *Jewish War* alone, in combination with various books of *Jewish Antiquities*, and, in a few cases, only with *Against Apion*. While the *Jewish Antiquities*' Table of Contents seems to have been part of the original translation (Sievers 2007, 291; Levenson and Martin 2009, 315), the manuscripts of *Jewish War* are often not divided into chapters, and the individual books are variously numbered. For example, Books 1–7 of *Jewish War* are often numbered as Books 13–19 in manuscripts that have *Jewish Antiquities* 1–12 immediately followed by *Jewish War* and are sometimes

numbered as 21–27 in manuscripts in which *Jewish War* follows *Jewish Antiquities*. Most notably, the book divisions of the Latin *Jewish War* differ from the Greek., starting with Book 4: Latin 4 = Greek 4.1–325; Latin 5 = Greek 4.326–663; Latin 6 = Greek 5; Latin 7 = Greek 6 and 7.

The following analysis of the Latin manuscripts of Josephus is based on a collation of passages from 108 manuscripts: 74 including *Jewish War* (out of a total of 146 known to us, including two not listed by Blatt); 84 including *Jewish Antiquities* (out of a total of 174 known to us, including three not listed by Blatt). We have collated *Jewish Antiquities* 11:311–347; 14:479–484, 18.63–64, 18.116–119, 20.199–203, and *Jewish War* 6.193–213. In addition, we have collated proper names with a variety of forms in *Jewish Antiquities* 13.269, 271, 365, 370, 376 (*acerus, eucerus, eucrus, seuerus, ceraunus, ceros*, etc.; *grippus, crispus, crippus, erippus, grippa, agrippa*, etc.); and *Jewish War* 6.237–238 (*tiberius alexander, tiberius et alexander; frigio, frige, frigi[a]e*, etc.; [*a*]eternius, acternius, ac ternius, asternius, etc.). We have also compared a limited selection of readings in other passages.

Although this is obviously a small selection, the variety in the forms of the proper names and a number of distinctive variants in the extended passages (see [Figure 21.2](#), for an example from *War* 6.204) have allowed us to draw preliminary but significant conclusions about the relationships among the manuscripts, especially secure in cases where the same patterns of agreement emerge in several passages. At this stage of our research, we have limited our analysis to the relationship of textual variants and have not taken into account other factors that will no doubt lead to a more precise understanding in the future, such as provenance, patterns of lacunae, marginal notes, and illustrations (the most thoroughly studied aspect of the Latin manuscripts of Josephus, e.g., Deutsch 1986; Schreckenberg 1992; Liebl 1997).

We have not collated any passages from other books of *Jewish Antiquities* or from *Against Apion*. For the latter, we have Boysen's text and analysis; for the former, Blatt's book and and Boysen's article (Boysen 1903). Our analysis of material from the second half of *Jewish Antiquities* is often consistent with Blatt's analysis of the first half. As far as we know, ours is the first analysis of the relationship among *Jewish War* manuscripts.

The manuscript groups we have identified (A–L) are presented in [Figure 21.1](#). We have used Blatt's sigla for *Jewish Antiquities* manuscripts. For manuscripts without Blatt's sigla (i.e., the three *Jewish Antiquities* manuscripts not in his catalogue and *Jewish War* manuscripts without *Jewish Antiquities*), we have used abbreviations as listed in [Figures 21.4](#) and [21.5](#), which also has Blatt's sigla in alphabetical order. Major subgroups are indicated by numbers and other identifiable subgroups are indicated by brackets and parentheses within brackets (not every manuscript can be assigned to a subgroup). The results of our analysis are presented separately for each of the sample passages within each group (*Ant.* 11 means *Ant.*

11.311–326; *Ant.* 13 means the proper names analyzed from that book, etc.). This is necessary because the same manuscript can sometimes represent different textual traditions in different sections. It would be misleading, therefore, to simply assign a manuscript to a particular group without indicating which parts of the manuscript we have analyzed. It should be noted that not every *Jewish Antiquities* sample passage is represented for each manuscript, either because (1) the manuscript does not contain the passage (see the list of manuscripts at the beginning of the References for the contents of each manuscript); (2) practical constraints made it impossible in a few cases to collate all sections of a particular manuscript; or (3) the results were not conclusive enough to assign a section of a manuscript to a particular group.

21.4.1 Comments on Selected Groups

- i. ANiese and Destinon used Vat. lat. 1992 as the primary witness for their Latin text of the *Jewish War*, but as they note, it has a number of places where the text is obviously wrong. A dramatic example from our sample is the substitution at *Jewish War* 6.212 of the text of Rufinus’s translation of Eusebius (Ruf. *Hist. eccl.* 3.6.27) for the reading in the Latin *Jewish War*.
- ii. BClosely related to Group A. At *Jewish War* 6.194 Group B.1 has the correct reading: *misera (miseria 5058A) diripientes animae uiatica* (ἐξαρπάζοντες τὰ ταλαίπωρα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐφόδια; “snatching away the pitiful provisions of life”). Elsewhere the manuscript tradition has *miser/miseril/miseris/miserel/miserae* and *uiaticum*. Along with Group L, at *Jewish War* 6.201 Group B preserves the best reading for Maria’s hometown (*Bethazob*). Reg. lat. 944 has readings characteristic of both Group A and Group B.
- iii. COne important manuscript to which we have not had access apparently belongs to this group: Cod. Lat. V F 34 (Naples, Biblioteca nazionale), which Flusser argues is closely related to La (Plut.66.1; Flusser 1959, 461–462, and 1974, 128). Cod. Lat. V F 34 should also be close to C (Monte Cassino, cod. 124;), upon which Blatt claims La depends (1958, 32). In the sections from *Jewish Antiquities* 11 and 14, hr (Harley 3691) has readings from Group C as well as from Group D, apparently using manuscripts such as La and C (Group C) and L (Group D). BN5054 was owned by Petrarch, who annotated it extensively (Refe 2004). Only Groups C and L.1 have the uninterpolated, as well as correct, order for *Jewish Antiquities* 11.311–347.
- iv. DAt *Jewish Antiquities* 11.311–347, this group of thirteen manuscripts,

including eight from the eighth to the tenth century, has the order 11.311–312a, 326b–342a, 312b–326a, 342b–347, with the first part of *Jewish War* 4.105 from the Latin translation of the *Jewish War* inserted between 311 and 312 and the second part inserted between 342a and 312b. VI (Plimpton 43) has the order 11.311–312a, 326b–342a, 312b–347 (i.e. 326b–342 is repeated). VI¹ indicates the section that belongs to Group D. The repetition of 326b–342 belongs to Group E and is designated VI².

- v. E *Jewish Antiquities* 11 has the order 311, *Jewish War* 4.105, 312b–347. The late eleventh-century f (BN5763; *Ant.* 17–20) is almost always incorrectly dated to the ninth century (e.g., Blatt 1958; Liebl 1997) because it is the second part of a manuscript made up of several different manuscripts, of which the first part is a ninth-century copy of Caesar’s *Gallic War*.
- vi. F *Jewish Antiquities* 11 has the order 311, 313–342a, *Jewish War* 4.105b, 312c, 342b–347. Werd (Berlin lat. 226) was used by Niese and also by the editor of the 1524 Cologne edition (Stüwer 1969, basing his conclusion on monastery records). Best 7010, not listed by Blatt, depends directly on Werd for texts we analyzed and for illustrations (Liebl 1997, 101–102).
- vii. H and J Closely related groups. *Jewish Antiquities* 11 has the same order and interpolation from *Jewish War* 4.105 as Group E. Kletter (2005, 124–135) provides descriptions of twenty English manuscripts of the Latin translations of Josephus. Of the ten of these we have seen, nine belong to our Group J and one (Mt) belongs to our Group E. She reports (Kletter 2005, 158–159) that Michael Gullick offers the following classification of some manuscripts in our Group J: Du (1.1); Mir, Id (1.2); li, Alb, and Ca (2).
- viii. K Dresden A111 (*Jewish War/Against Apion*) had a great impact on the tradition because it was used by the 1480 Verona edition (the *editio princeps* of *Against Apion*), which was the basis for the text of both *Jewish War* and *Against Apion* in the Venice edition of 1481, and therefore in most subsequent editions, including the influential 1524 Cologne and 1524 Basel editions (see below). It contains many secondary readings, which found their way into these early printed editions; for example, all these manuscripts and editions (with the exception of Plut. 19sin.04) have *paterentur* for *audirent siue conspicerent* at the end of *Jewish War* 6.213, with the result that the text reads “they were called fortunate who had died before they experienced it,” rather than “they were called fortunate who had died before they heard or gazed upon it,” which corresponds more closely to the Greek (πρὶν ἀκοῦσαι καὶ θεάσασθαι; “before they heard and gazed upon”).

ix. LCn, Vn, Adm, Lamp, z, Sec, cr, Wien353, and Crem (grL.2) are closely related Austrian manuscripts (*pace* Blatt, who puts Cn in family σ and cr in family φ). Sa, b, Sch, and t (grL.1) belong with the important Group C for *Jewish Antiquities* 11. Group L.1 had great influence on the tradition because manuscripts from it were the basis for the 1470 Augsburg edition, the *editio princeps* of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*, whose *Jewish Antiquities* text was taken over by the 1481 Venice edition from which all other Venice editions, the 1511 Paris edition, and the 1513/1514 Milan edition ultimately derive. The connection of the text of Pd (“Codex Gigas”) to the rest of the tradition is difficult to assess because it frequently changes words and expressions into a more simplified Latin, abridges a great deal, and sometimes adds new material entirely.

21.5 Early Editions: 1470–1528

A complete list of all printed editions from 1470–1528, correcting previous lists, with an indication of the manuscript or printed source(s) on which each depends, can be found in the References. The 1534 Basel edition, on which the 1534 Cologne edition depends, was thoroughly emended by Gelenius on the basis of Greek manuscript evidence. Since the 1534 editions became the basis for all later editions, none of these provides a reliable witness to the Latin manuscript tradition.

Aside from Stüwer’s 1969 article on the 1524 Cologne edition’s use of Werd (Berlin lat. 226) and Boysen’s Preface to his *Against Apion*, we have found no discussion of the manuscript basis for any of the editions or the relationship of the editions to one another. Links to online fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century editions (except the “not after 1475” edition) can be found at the British Library’s Incunabula Short Title Catalogue site and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek catalogue. Our analysis of the early editions is based not only on the passages we collated for the manuscripts, but also on the entire section *Jewish War* 6.193–304.

21.6 A Sample Text: Maria Driven Mad by Hunger (*Jewish War* 6.204)

The following example will help the reader understand not only how the manuscript groups can be identified and the earliest recoverable text can be established, but also what a rich variety of texts the manuscript tradition offers, crucial for understanding which text of Josephus was read at different

times and places. We present a full list of readings from seventy-four manuscripts (Figure 21.2) and all editions through 1524, excluding only orthographic variants, obvious slips of the pen, and (for early editions) typographical errors. We use Blatt's sigla for manuscripts that also include the *Jewish Antiquities* and an abbreviation for others (see Figures 21.4 and 21.5). Readings of one or two members of a large group that differ from the reading in the rest of the group are indicated in parentheses. When an entire group has the same variant, we use our sigla in Figure 21.1 (e.g. grE = Group E). Eddv = 1480 Verona, 1481 Venice, 1486 Venice, 1499 Venice, 1502 Venice, 1510 Venice, 1511 Paris, 1513/14 Milan, 1524 Cologne, 1524 Basel editions; Eddl = 1475 Lübeck, 1514 Paris, 1519 Paris editions. Figure 21.3 has the texts and intentionally very literal translations for the Greek and Latin of the passage.

21.6.1 Establishing the Text

The earliest recoverable text can be established by comparison with the Greek. For example *patrando* corresponds more closely to the Greek εὐρεῖν than *parando*; *laborat* rather than *parabat* translates ἐκοπία; and “with vehemence of spirit and also necessity (*necessitate*) as instigators (*impulsoribus*), she was roused against nature” is closer to the Greek “taking as a counselor anger together with necessity, she moved against nature” than any of the several variants in the Latin, which in place of *impulsoribus* have *impulsa rebus* (e.g., “impelled by circumstances, she was roused against nature”).

21.6.2 Evaluating the Manuscripts and Early Editions

Group A, containing manuscripts from the ninth, tenth/eleventh, twelfth, and fifteenth centuries, has the best reading for each variant. The fifteenth-century Plut. 66.7, however, is not an independent witness since it depends on the 1475 Rome edition. Of the early editions, the 1475 Rome edition has the best text because it depends on the tenth/eleventh-century Vat. 1992. All other early editions have multiple erroneous readings. For example, the large group Eddv (based ultimately on Dresden A111) that includes the 1524 Cologne and 1524 Basel editions has three clearly secondary readings (*parabat*, *ui*, *impulsa rebus*).

21.6.3 The Character, Accuracy, and Style of the

Translation

The Latin provides a literal translation of the Greek, often reflecting the Greek word order. Perhaps the biggest change is the use of *undique autem adempta iam erat ei etiam repperiendi facultas* (“but from everywhere the capability of even finding it had now been taken away from her”) for πανταχόθεν δὲ ἄπορον ἦν ἥδη καὶ τὸ εὑρεῖν (“but from everywhere even finding it was now impossible”). Even here the translation “had been taken away” for “impossible” does not distort the sense of the original. The two different Latin words *irrepserat* (“crept into”) and *excitatur* (“was roused”) used for the Greek ἐχώρει (“moved”) add color and variety to the sentence without changing the construction.

This passage demonstrates why the style and accuracy of the translation cannot be evaluated without a good text. For example, the secondary readings *parabat* and *impulsa rebus* found in the vast majority of manuscripts and early editions would unfairly suggest the translator had not properly understood the Greek.

21.6.4 Comparison with Rufinus and Pseudo-Hegesippus

This passage also provides an opportunity to compare the translation of *Jewish War* with the other two popular versions that made Josephan material available to Latin readers from Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages: Rufinus’s translation of Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* and Pseudo-Hegesippus’s *On the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Figure 21.3). The differences can be appreciated even in an extremely literal English translation (the only significant Latin words the Latin *Jewish War* and Rufinus have in common are *repperiendi*, *uisceribus*, and *medullis*). The literal nature of the Latin translation of *Jewish War* contrasts with Rufinus’s more rhetorical and dramatic style, which adds intensifying adjectives and truncates phrases. Pseudo-Hegesippus provides a free paraphrase, which radically changes the original text.

21.7 Toward a Critical Edition of Josephus in Latin

The availability of digital manuscript images affords exciting new possibilities for analyzing a large quantity of manuscripts, as in the Homer Multitext Project, and we intend to make full use of digital resources to produce a

critical edition of the Latin text of *Jewish War* 6.

To create a critical edition of the Latin translation of Josephus, understanding the relationship among the extant manuscripts remains important, but establishing the earliest recoverable reading often depends more on comparison with the Greek text than on selecting the “best” manuscripts. Reporting a wide variety of variants is necessary to provide a large pool for comparison with the Greek text. Given the importance of Josephus’s works for cultural historians, it is also essential to include as many variants as possible, since scholars of the medieval and early modern world need a text that reflects the variety of readings available in various times and locations.

21.8 Suggestions for Using the Latin Translations of Josephus before a New Edition Becomes Available

Although all but one of the early editions are online and are crucial for understanding how Josephus would have been read in the early modern period, they should not be used as reliable guides to the earliest recoverable text. Neither the 1470 Augsburg nor the 1480 Verona editions, the two that had the greatest impact on subsequent editions, is based on manuscripts with consistently good readings. Both stand behind the 1524 Basel edition, often claimed to be the best. Particularly unreliable are any editions from 1534 onwards, because they all ultimately depend on the 1534 Basel edition, which introduced many readings translating Greek words and phrases into Latin that have no basis in the Latin manuscript tradition. For example, Cardwell’s commonly used 1837 edition, available online, is based on the 1635 Geneva edition, which ultimately derives from Gelenius’s 1534 Basel edition. Those working on the Greek text should be aware that Niese’s report of the Latin manuscript evidence depends on an exceptionally narrow textual base, and, in any case, cannot be trusted to report all the readings that might be relevant for Greek textual critics.

The necessary scholarly alternative to the Niese edition and the early printed editions for those interested in *Jewish Antiquities* 6–20 and *Jewish War* is to consult the Latin manuscripts online. For the present, we suggest consulting a representative of each group we have identified. Of the Latin manuscripts Niese used, two of those he consulted for *Jewish Antiquities* are at this writing online: W (*Ant.* 1–12) and La (*Ant.* 1–16). For the *Jewish War* manuscripts he used, neither Vat. 1992 nor Werd (consulted also for the second part of *Jewish Antiquities*) is currently online, but D, Lau, and Best 7010 are online with readings almost identical to Werd in the passages we have collated. Best 7010 is a twelfth-century copy of Werd, and Lau and D, with some readings better

than Werd, are available in exceptionally clear digitized formats. Also online are Non, W (*Jewish War*), BN5057, and Bam80 from our group A, of which Vat. 1992 is a member. From the important Group B, Bam79, BN5058A, and BN1615 are online. Those working on *Jewish Antiquities* should certainly consult online La and L (the manuscript on which Blatt often relies), as well as other early representatives of Blatt's "Southern Group." Any serious work on *Jewish Antiquities* 6–10 will have to use the sixth-century papyrus, Cimelio 1 (Blatt has readings from the small part of *Ant.* 5 that has been preserved). In the absence of a published text (a clear desideratum), the transcription ascribed to Giulio Cesare Della Croce (but probably by Felice Monti, as mentioned above) might be used to help decipher the difficult-to-read papyrus. Unfortunately neither the papyrus nor the collation is available online.

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"Not after 1475." ISTC no. ij00482000. No date, place, or publisher. Must have been published by 1475, the date of an acquisition note in a copy described in a sale catalogue. *Ant.*, *War*. Colin (1973) suggests Valenciennes, Bruges, or Ghent as the place of publication. Source: manuscript(s) closely related to Ha and Cb. Lacuna at *Ant.* 20.26–38 supplied from another manuscript.

1475–1476 Lübeck. ISTC no. ij00483000. No date, place, or publisher, but is clearly a product of Lucas Brandis, whose career is well documented. *Ant.*, *War*. Source: Manuscript(s) closely related to Alb, Ar, ld, li, and Cov.

1475 Rome. ISTC no. ij00488000. Arnoldus Pannartz. 25 Nov. 1475. Ed. "emendavit" Bartholomaeus Platina. *Jewish War*. Source: Vat. 1992. One of Platina's emendations ("vatechor" for "vatezobra") appears to be based on a Greek text, since 00392αθεχωρ is the most common reading in the Greek tradition and is found in no other Latin manuscript we have seen.

1480 Verona. ISTC no. ij00484000. Petrus Maufer, 25 Dec. 1480. Ed. Ludovicus Cendrata. *Jewish War, Apion*. Source: Dresden A111, as Boysen noted for *Apion* and as we have confirmed for *Jewish War*.

1481 Venice. ISTC no. ij00485000. Reynaldus de Novimagio: Vol. 1: *Ant.* (10 May 1481; incorrectly given as 1400 in the colophon); Vol. 2: *War* and *Apion* (31 March 1481). Ed. Hieronymus Squarzafricanus. Sources: 1470 Augsburg for *Ant.* and 1480 Verona for *War, Apion*.

1486 Venice. ISTC no. ij00486000. Johannes Rubens Vercellensis, 23 Oct. 1486. *Ant., War, Apion*. Source: 1481 Venice.

1499 Venice. ISTC no. ij00487000. Albertinus Vercellensis for Octavianus Scotus and his brother, 23 Oct. 1499. *Ant., War, Apion*. Addition of chapter summaries by Franciscus de Macerata. Source: 1486 Venice.

1502 Venice. Bernardinus Vercellensis, 21 Oct. 1502. *Ant., War, Apion*. Source: 1499 Venice. Notes at the beginning of Latin Book 7 (Greek Book 6) and at the point in Latin Book 7 where Greek Book 7 begins indicate that the editor had access to Greek manuscripts, used occasionally to emend the text.

1510 Venice. Gregorius de Gregoriis, 29 Oct. 1510. *Ant., War, Apion*. Source: 1502 Venice.

1511 Paris. Nicholas Des Prez (Nicolaus de Pratis) and Poncet Le Preux, 30 Sept. 1511. *Ant., War, Apion*. Source: 1499 Venice.

1513/1514 Milan. Alexandrinus Minutianus. Colophon at end of *Ant.* is dated 10 Jan. 1514, but the colophon at the end of *Apion* (before Pseudo-Hegesippus) reads “Mediolani Apud Alexandrum Minutianum. MDXIII.” *Ant., War, Apion*, Ps.-Heg. Source (for Josephus texts): 1499 Venice.

1513/1514 Paris. Jean Barbier, François Regnault, and Jean Petit. Ed. Robert Gouillet. Colophons: 30 Jan. 1513 (after Preface); 1513 (after *Ant.*); 1 Dec. 1513 (after *Apion* and before supplementary material); 30 March 1514 (after supplementary material, but before Pseudo-Hegesippus). The Preface to Pseudo-Hegesippus, taken from the Ascensius edition, is dated 7 July 1510. *Ant., War, Apion*, Ps.-Heg. Source: 1475 Lübeck with some readings from 1502 or 1510 Venice edition.

1519 Paris. Reprint of 1513/1514 Paris by same editor and printers.

1524 Cologne. Eucharius Cervicornus (Hirtzhorn) with the support of Gottfried Hittorp, 1 Feb. 1524. Ed. Jakob Sobius. *Ant., War, Apion*, 4

Macc. Source: one or more of the Venice editions, from which many inferior readings derive, and Werd. 4 Maccabees, which was generally attributed to Josephus, is from Erasmus's edition, first published by Cervicornus in 1517.

1524 Basel. Johann Froben, September, 1524. *Ant., War, Apion, 4 Macc.* Source: Closely follows 1524 Cologne in passages we have analyzed.

1528 Lyons. Sebastian Gryphius. 3 vols. *Ant., War, Apion, 4 Macc.* Source: 1524 Basel.

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FURTHER READING

As far as we are aware, aside from two excellent books focusing on illustrated manuscripts (Deutsch 1986; Liebl 1997), Boysen and Blatt provide the only discussions of the manuscript tradition of the Latin Josephus. Kletter (2005) is an important resource for studying the Latin Josephus manuscripts of English provenance. For those interested in pursuing the subject, we offer here suggestions on how to gain access to individual manuscripts and information about them. Currently online Latin Josephus manuscripts are indicated with an asterisk in [Figures 21.4](#) and [21.5](#). Unfortunately there is no one site providing an extensive list or significant number of links to online Latin manuscripts of Josephus. The most useful of the general sites we have found with links to some online Josephus manuscripts are Manuscripta Mediaevalia, Europeana Regia, the UCLA Catalogue of Digitized Medieval Manuscripts, and e-codices: Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland. These sites as well as individual library sites (especially Gallica at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and teca digitale at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana) should be checked regularly because many institutions are in the process of digitizing large numbers of manuscripts. Although only one Latin Josephus manuscript from the Vatican is currently online (Lc), the Vatican manuscript digitization project promises to be an exceptionally important resource. The Consulting Medieval Manuscripts Online site at the University of Tennessee provides an extensive list of sites with digitized medieval manuscripts, although it is not possible to search there for particular authors. The new Latin Josephus Project website by Richard Pollard and Josh Timmermann currently (February 2015) provides a searchable transcription of *Jewish Antiquities* 1–8 from Bamberg Msc. Class. 78 (Ba: *Jewish Antiquities* 1–20) with plans to complete the transcription of this manuscript as well as of a manuscript of *Jewish War*.

Ordering copies of manuscripts from most libraries is possible, but prices and speed of delivery vary widely. There are several US libraries with extensive microfilm collections with Josephus texts, such as the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, the Notre Dame Medieval Institute, and the Vatican Film Library at St. Louis University. For information about individual manuscripts, current library manuscript catalogues should always be consulted to update the information in Blatt and other lists. Many of these catalogues can be found online at library websites, sometimes as downloadable PDFs of published catalogues. For ninth-century manuscripts, Bischoff's catalogue should be consulted (Bischoff 1998–2004). When current catalogues are not available, images of earlier catalogues are often available. The Manuscripta Mediaevalia site has links to catalogue descriptions from a large number of primarily German libraries.

CHAPTER 22

The Testimonium Flavianum

Alice Whealey

22.1 Introduction of the Problem and Main Sources

By far the most famous part of Josephus's works is the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum*, a brief passage about Jesus of Nazareth that appears in all extant manuscripts of the eighteenth book of *Jewish Antiquities* (18.63–64). The notoriety of the text derives from the fact that its authenticity has been in dispute since the sixteenth century. The *textus receptus* reads:

At that time there arose Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one should call him a man. For he was a performer of marvelous works, a teacher of those who receive with pleasure the truth. And he won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by the foremost men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who first loved him did not cease. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the holy prophets having foretold these things and many other marvels about him. And even now the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has not disappeared.

The *Testimonium Flavianum* was first quoted *verbatim* by the fourth-century Christian Eusebius of Caesarea (d. ca. 340), not for anti-Jewish apologetical purposes, as has often been assumed, but rather for anti-pagan apologetical purposes. This fact casts doubt on the common assumption that the *Testimonium* was originally fabricated or substantially rewritten for anti-Jewish apologetical reasons. In his *Proof of the Gospel* and *On Divine Manifestation*, Eusebius used the *Testimonium* to prove to those pagans who charged that Jesus had not performed valid miracles that Jesus must have had unusual powers if, as the *Testimonium* stated, “he won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks.” He did not explicitly comment on any other statement in the *Testimonium*, including its reference to Jesus' messianic status. In his most influential work, *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius cited the text without commenting on any of its specific statements in order to expose the chronological inaccuracies of the *Acts of Pilate*, a pagan satire of the gospels that had misdated Jesus' death to 21 C.E. (Whealey 2003, 20–22). On the whole, Eusebius's use of the text was quite modest from an apologetic and theological point of view.

Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* was translated into Latin and Syriac by the

fifth century, and was used by many subsequent late antique and medieval writers. This played a significant role in making the *Testimonium* among the most cited parts of Josephus's works. In fact, more ancient and medieval citations or quotations of the *Testimonium* derive from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, whether in the Greek original or in translation, than from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* itself. When Cassiodorus had *Jewish Antiquities* translated into Latin in the sixth century, his scriptorium even recycled the same version of the *Testimonium* appearing in the Latin translation of *Ecclesiastical History* rather than retranslating its own version of the passage from scratch (see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). Writers who cited the *Testimonium* from *Ecclesiastical History* rather than directly from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* include Malalas (ca. 530), Georgius Monachus (ca. 890), Agapius of Hierapolis (ca. 930), Pseudo-Simeon Magister (ca. 950), Cedrenus (ca. 1100), and Michael the Syrian (ca. 1195). All are Eastern Christian chroniclers who cite the text in passing while reworking other material taken from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* as part of their general recounting of Christian history. This suggests that Eastern Christian chroniclers tended to cite the text more out of routine than out of a strong interest in promoting the text's content, a fact that contradicts the assumptions of many modern critics of the text's authenticity, namely that it was extremely important for Christians to cite because it proved that Josephus wrote of Jesus in laudatory terms.

In contrast to such chroniclers, the major Christian theologians of the late antique and medieval period who used Josephus's works, such as Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrose, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas did not refer to the *Testimonium*. They preferred to use other parts of Josephus's works: usually either his account of the Old Testament in the first half of *Jewish Antiquities* for their own exegesis, or his treatment of the final stages of the Roman-Jewish War from the sixth and seventh books of the *Jewish War* (Schreckenberg 1972, 88, 96–97, 161). More a scholar and exegete than a theologian, Jerome did cite the *Testimonium*, but he did so only once; in contrast, he cited Josephus's report of a preternatural voice announcing abandonment of the temple (*War* 6.299–300), which he drew from Eusebius's *Chronicle*, on six separate occasions in his works (*Letter* 46; *Letter* 120; *Commentary on Matthew* 4.27; *Commentary on Isaiah* 18.66 v. 6; *Commentary on Ezekiel* 3.11 v. 12–23; 14, 47 v. 6–12). Most theologians' indifference to the *Testimonium* probably stemmed from the fact that its portrait of Jesus was inadequate or irrelevant to the dogmatic aims of late antique and medieval orthodox Christology. In citing the *Testimonium* multiple times, Eusebius was *sui generis* among patristic writers; arguably related to this is the fact that Eusebius was innovative among patristic writers in other more general ways (on Eusebius's use of the *Testimonium*, see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki in this volume): in his exceptional interest in early Christian history, his methodology of frequent *verbatim* quotation, and his

unusually extensive use of Josephus's works (Schrekenberg 1972, 79–84), including the first use of Josephus as an historian of the political background to the New Testament period (Whealey 2003, 18–19).

Aside from the *Testimonium* appearing in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, the most influential quotation of the text is that appearing in Jerome's *On Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*, ca. 392). Jerome's literal translation of the passage differs in one critical way from the *textus receptus*. Instead of reading "he was the Christ," Jerome's *Testimonium* reads "he was believed to be the Christ" (*credebatur esse Christus*). This variant reading is quite ancient: *On Illustrious Men* survives in manuscripts dating from the sixth or seventh century, several centuries older than the oldest Greek manuscripts of either *Jewish Antiquities* or Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. Moreover, this reading is independently supported by a literal Syriac translation of the *Testimonium* appearing in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian, the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch (1155–1199), which contains an almost identical reading: "he was supposed to be the Christ." Since Syriac and Latin Christian writers did not read each other's works in the late antique and medieval period while both did read Greek Christian literature, the implication of the parallel readings of Jerome and Michael is that there once must have been a Greek version of the *Testimonium* reading something like "he was thought to be the Christ."

22.2 Evidence from Pseudo-Hegesippus

An early text indirectly supporting the conclusion that the oldest form of the *Testimonium* once read something like "he was thought to be Christ" comes from the anonymous late fourth-century Latin Christian text known as *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* (*De excidio*; see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). Its author is now conventionally called Pseudo-Hegesippus, probably due to the fact that in the medieval period his work was confused with the lost work of the second-century Greek Christian Hegesippus. Pseudo-Hegesippus adapted the bulk of the *Jewish War* and select passages of the *Jewish Antiquities*, including the *Testimonium*, to craft his own anti-Jewish interpretive account of the first-century Roman-Jewish War. In addition to Josephus, he drew on pagan Latin historians, the Latin Bible, and part of a Latin Christian New Testament apocryphon (*De excidio* 3.2 // *Passio apostolorum Petri et Pauli* 8–13; Lipsius 1891, 228–233).

Pseudo-Hegesippus paraphrases every part of the *Testimonium* except the statement in the *textus receptus* that "he was the Christ" (*De excidio* 2.12). Given his propensity to exaggerate the laudatory aspects of other parts of the passage, it is difficult to believe that Pseudo-Hegesippus would have omitted this phrase if it had originally been in his text. Nor can Pseudo-Hegesippus's

paraphrase of the *Testimonium* have been based on a late version of the passage for, like Jerome's *On Illustrious Men*, Pseudo-Hegesippus's *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* is extant in very early manuscripts, with the earliest dating to the sixth century. It is clear that Pseudo-Hegesippus's *Testimonium* is derived directly from a copy of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* rather than from the works of Eusebius or another Christian writer, for Pseudo-Hegesippus used two passages from Book 18 of *Jewish Antiquities*, ignored by Eusebius and other earlier Christian writers, which follow either immediately or shortly after the *Testimonium* (*De excidio* 2.4 // *Ant.* 18.65–80; *De excidio* 2.5 // *Ant.* 18.85–87). Pseudo-Hegesippus is also noteworthy for being the first Christian to have used the *Testimonium* for the purpose of anti-Jewish polemic. Such use of the text was not uncommon later in the Middle Ages, particularly in the Latin West. Western Christians who use the text in such a way, although with greater moderation than Pseudo-Hegesippus, include Peter of Blois and John of Salisbury.

22.3 *Sefer Yosippon* and the *Testimonium*

A quite different medieval approach to the *Testimonium* appears in the various forms of the *Sefer Yosippon*, a Jewish Hebrew adaptation of the first sixteen books of the Latin translation of *Jewish Antiquities* and Pseudo-Hegesippus's *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* (on the *Sefer Yosippon*, see [Chapter 25](#) by Dönitz in this volume). The oldest version of this work, which apparently derives from tenth-century Italy, contains no reference to Jesus. However, its author must have encountered Pseudo-Hegesippus's paraphrase of the *Testimonium*, since this exists in manuscripts of *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* that long predate the *Sefer Yosippon*. The original author and most adaptors of the *Sefer Yosippon* evidently omitted Pseudo-Hegesippus's reference to Jesus because of their *a priori* assumption that a Jewish historian would not have written so favorably about Jesus. A few later versions of the *Sefer Yossipon* do contain a brief, hostile reference to Jesus, which, however, was not directly based on any version of the *Testimonium* (Flusser 1987, 395). Rather such references represent attempts by later Jewish adaptors of the text to fit Jesus somewhere into Jewish history.

22.4 Medieval and Early Modern Jewish and Christian Views

In the medieval and early modern period, Jewish scholars known to have voiced an opinion on the *Testimonium*, such as Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508)

and Menassah ben Israel (1604–1657), rejected its authenticity because of the lack of a parallel in the *Sefer Yosippon*. Jewish argumentation against the authenticity of the *Testimonium* due to its absence in most versions of the *Sefer Yosippon* and the varied state of the manuscripts regarding Jesus had already also been noticed by some Christians in the medieval period. Gerald of Wales (d. ca. 1223) claimed that an Oxford cleric informed him he had seen copies of “the Hebrew Josephus” both with and without a reference to Jesus (*Education of a Prince* 1.17). Medieval Jews’ rejection of the text based on its absence from the *Sefer Yosippon* did not erode the belief of their Christian contemporaries in its authenticity. Indeed, there is no evidence that Christians in either the medieval or ancient period questioned the authenticity of the *Testimonium* on any grounds. And in the early modern period this sort of argument against the text’s authenticity made little intellectual headway outside Jewish circles because, as the more perspicacious Christian scholars such as Joseph Scaliger pointed out, it was based on the erroneous assumption that the *Sefer Yosippon* was an authentic work of Josephus rather than a much later recasting of some of Josephus’s works (Whealey 2003, 83).

Explicit claims by Christians that the *Testimonium* was forged were first made at the very end of the sixteenth century. The earliest extant claim was made by the Lutheran reformer, Lucas Osiander (1534–1604) in his anti-Catholic church history published in 1592, *Epitomes historiae ecclesiasticae centuriae decimae sextae*. Osiander did not invoke the silence of the *Sefer Yosippon* nor did he adduce any sort of textual evidence against the passage at all; his argument against its authenticity was entirely *a priori*. As he wrote, “If Josephus had felt what he asserted in that testimony, he would have been a Christian; however, nothing with even a whiff of Christianity can be found in his writings” (*Epitomes historiae* 1, Book 2, Chapter 7.17). It is unclear why Osiander felt that he had to denounce the text in his church history, which was written partly in response to the fiercely pro-Catholic church history of Caesar Baronius (1538–1607). Perhaps Osiander was indirectly responding to the two separate defenses of the basic authenticity of the *Testimonium* that Baronius had made in the first two volumes of his church history, *Ecclesiastical Annals* (*Annales ecclesiastici*), published respectively in 1588 and 1590 (Whealey 2003, 90–94).

It was not until the seventeenth century that scholars began to use textual evidence to support their arguments that the *Testimonium* had been fabricated. In 1634, the French Reformed scholar Louis Cappel (1568–1658) deemed the fact that the *Testimonium* does not fit into its surrounding context very smoothly as evidence of interpolation. More substantively, another French Reformed scholar, Tanaquilus Faber (1615–1672), argued that the *Testimonium*’s statement that “he was the Christ” is contradicted by Origen’s claims in his latest major works that Josephus “did not believe in Jesus as the Christ” (*Against Celsus* 1.48; *Commentary on Matthew* 10, 17). Nevertheless,

those scholars who rejected the text's authenticity were not the only ones to adduce textual evidence in support of their side of what had now become an open debate. Baronius rejected the thesis of fabrication, but argued that Jerome's translation reading "he was believed to be the Christ" (*credebatur esse Christus*) was more authentic than the reading of the *textus receptus*, "he was the Christ," since in his view it was more "in accord with the zeal and faith of its author, who showed himself to be Jewish and not Christian in everything" (*Annales ecclesiastici*, Vol. 2. *Annum Christi* 96). Faber, who identified Eusebius of Caesarea as the original fabricator of the *Testimonium* without, however, providing substantive textual evidence to support this claim, attempted to deflect this argument by accusing Jerome of having deliberately changed "he was the Christ" to "he was believed to be the Christ" because he thought that it would sound more plausible as coming from a Jew. Faber also argued that in general the *Testimonium* was too admiring of Jesus to have been written by a Jew (*Letter* 43; Whealey 2003, 130–131; 160 nn. 24–25).

The assumption embodied in his argument, that a Jew could not have written as favorably about Jesus as the *textus receptus Testimonium* does, was reiterated by some other early modern Christians who rejected the text. For example, Cappel had argued that:

Truly, if Josephus had felt and written such reverent things of Christ ... he would have narrated the entire account of Christ in more broad and complete fashion. Instead not even a vestige of this account appears elsewhere in his whole history, not even anything about the disciples of Christ; and this appears to derive from no other cause than his hatred of Christ and the Christian religion, since he himself was a stubborn Jew.

(*Compendium Historiae Judaicae* apud Georgius Hornius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Anno XX54; Whealey 2003, 101–102)

As already noted, the assumption that a Jew could not have written as favorably about Jesus as does the *Testimonium* had also long animated medieval and early modern Jewish objection to the text. It was to have a very long afterlife in the controversy over the authenticity of the *Testimonium*: to this day, certain proponents of the forgery thesis continue to rely on this sort of *a priori* argument.

Defenders of the complete integrity and authenticity of the *textus receptus* became scarcer after widespread scholarly exposure to the idea, first voiced by Faber, that Origen's statements contradicted its statement "he was the Christ." After Faber, many scholars labeled the entire passage an interpolation, while others argued that although Josephus had indeed written something about Jesus in *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63–64, the current passage had been extensively rewritten. On the other hand, there certainly were scholars who argued that the text was basically authentic with perhaps only the phrase "he

was the Christ” being corrupted from “he was believed to be the Christ,” although this position was probably in the minority by the late nineteenth century. Indicative of the strength of the complete fabrication thesis among scholars by that time is the fact that in his critical edition of *Jewish Antiquities*, Niese (1890) bracketed the entire *Testimonium*, implying that the whole passage, and not just individual phrases in it, was an interpolation.

22.5 Modern Interpretations

By the early twentieth century, the widespread scholarly presumption that the text was a fabrication may have been strengthened by the idea promoted in certain popular literature of the time that Jesus of Nazareth had never existed but rather had been created *ex nihilo* by the early church after the model of mythical savior gods of some contemporary non-Christian Greco-Roman religions. Proponents of the Christ as myth thesis, who continue to promote this idea in popular media, including the Internet, often appear to assume that the *Testimonium* had been fabricated precisely to prove the historicity of Christ. However, ancient literature in general and the ancient literature citing the *Testimonium* in particular reveal that this cannot have been the case. No extant ancient literature indicates that the ancient critics of Christianity ever charged that Jesus of Nazareth had never existed; the claim that Jesus never existed is not known to have been made before the Enlightenment. Certainly there is no evidence that the *Testimonium* was ever used to address such a claim before that period: allusions to doubts about Jesus’ historical existence in connection with the literature concerning the *Testimonium* only first appear between 1699 and 1706 (Whealey 2003, 142–143).

Before the second half of the twentieth century, it is probably fair to say that commentators had brought relatively little that was new to the debate over the text’s authenticity since the early modern period. In the first half of the twentieth century, Alexander Berendts (1863–1912), Viktor Istrin (1906–1967), and Robert Eisler (1882–1949) argued for the partial authenticity of the Slavonic Josephus, an Old Russian adaptation of the *Jewish War* containing a passage that seems to have been based on the *Testimonium*, as well as other references to Jesus that are not extant in Josephus’s works (on the Slavonic Josephus, see [Chapter 26](#) by Leeming in this volume). However, there was no clear agreement even among these three scholars on precisely which parts of this unique material were authentic. And their controversial thesis about the Slavonic Josephus, which provoked fierce disagreement from more cautious scholars, was too much of a minority view to steer the overall debate over the authenticity of the *Testimonium* in new directions (Whealey 2003, 173–185).

Of much greater significance in changing the tenor of the controversy was a monograph published in 1971 by Shlomo Pines that drew scholarly attention to two different versions of the *Testimonium*, one found in the tenth-century Arabic chronicle of Agapius, the Melkite bishop of Hierapolis, and one in the twelfth-century Syriac chronicle of Michael the Syrian. Agapius's version of the passage differs widely from the *textus receptus* in a number of ways, including the fact that it states that Jesus was "perhaps" the Christ. Pines argued that it was more likely than the *textus receptus* to reflect what Josephus had originally written about Jesus because it is less characterized by what he considered the "Christian traits" of the *textus receptus* (Pines 1971, 33). For example, not only does it use dubitative language about Jesus' messianic status, but it fails to mention the role of Jewish leaders in Jesus' death. In contrast to Agapius's *Testimonium*, Michael's *Testimonium* is quite close to the *textus receptus* with the very significant exception of the phrase "he was the Christ," which instead reads, "he was supposed to be the Christ." As noted above, this is linguistically almost identical to the phrase "*credebatur esse Christus*" in Jerome's translation of the text, with both texts employing a passive past tense singular form of a verb meaning believe or suppose. Although Pines acknowledged that Agapius's original source must have been Syriac rather than Arabic, Pines assumed that Agapius's *Testimonium* must be more authentic than Michael's because he deemed the former to be less Christian-sounding than the latter. Pines demonstrated that the overall language of Michael's *Testimonium* was the same language as the *Testimonium* in the Syriac translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (Pines 1971, 27). Based on this fact, he hypothesized that Michael's *Testimonium* was a mixture of the *Testimonium* taken from the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Testimonium* taken from the Syriac source of Agapius.

The greatest weakness with Pines' thesis was that he did not conclusively investigate which sources Agapius and Michael used in their chronicles and their possible mutual relationship. Related to this weakness was that his theory, which proposed that Michael's *Testimonium* was a mixture of *Testimonia* from the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History* and the Syriac source that was used by Agapius, was excessively complex. Because Pines was guided by his *a priori* assumption that Agapius's *Testimonium* was less Christian-sounding than Michael's *Testimonium*, he neglected to investigate the much simpler, and therefore much more plausible, hypothesis that Agapius's and Michael's *Testimonia* derived from the same Syriac source, which Michael followed much more closely than Agapius because he was copying *verbatim* rather than translating. The failure of Pines to account for the seemingly inexplicable appearance of a very different version of the *Testimonium* in an Arabic medieval chronicle without any obvious sources or antecedents was perhaps one reason why reviewers were reluctant to accept his specific argument that Agapius's *Testimonium* was closer to what Josephus had

originally written about Jesus than the extant Greek *Testimonium* or its literal translations, including Jerome's and Michael's versions.

Of greater influence in shifting the controversy over the text was Pines' argument that Agapius's phrase "he was perhaps the Christ," and especially Michael's phrase "he was supposed to be the Christ," effectively undermined Faber's and some later critics' claim that Jerome had simply fabricated the phrase "he was believed to be the Christ" ("*credebatur esse Christus*") in order to make the *Testimonium* seem more credible as a Jewish composition (Pines 1971, 42–44). Also significant was his argument that if Josephus had written a passage about Jesus containing a statement demurring from the belief in Jesus' messiahship, as can be found in both Agapius's and Michael's *Testimonia*, it would readily explain Origen's statements that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ (Pines 1971, 65–66). Thus, Origen's statements could no longer be seen as supporting a simple presumption of total fabrication. Bibliographic reviews of the literature about the *Testimonium* do indicate that, despite the reluctance of reviewers to accept Pines' specific thesis that Agapius's *Testimonium* was closer to Josephus's original version of the passage, the view that the *textus receptus* is partly or mainly authentic has gained ground since Pines' publication (Feldman 1986, 618–619, 677).

In my own study of Agapius's and Michael's *Testimonia*, Pines' contention that Michael's version was derived from the Syriac translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* is supported, but in contrast to Pines, who never conclusively worked out the relationship between the sources of Michael's and Agapius's chronicles, it is pointed out that Michael and Agapius both used the same Syriac chronicle, which excerpted parts of the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History*, as their major source for the period from Creation to around 780 C.E., a fact that was already known to some specialists of the Eastern Christian chronicles of that period (Whealey 2008, 575–578). This means that not only Michael's *Testimonium* but also Agapius's *Testimonium* must ultimately derive from the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History*, Michael's version being a literal excerpt of it and Agapius's version only a paraphrase. This makes Michael a far more important witness to what Josephus originally wrote about Jesus than Agapius, an hypothesis that is further supported by the fact that Michael's phrase "he was supposed (*mstbr* 'ytwhy hw') to be the Christ" matches Jerome's very ancient literal translation reading "he was believed to be the Christ" ("*credebatur esse Christus*"). Along with Pines it is argued that an original *Testimonium* reading something like "he was thought to be the Christ" would readily explain Origen's claim that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ, and in accordance with this, it is pointed out that Michael's *mstbr* has an unusually skeptical connotation for a Christian to use for Jesus' messianic status, since the Syriac New Testament uses it for "he was thought" ("*enomizeto*") at Luke 3:23 (Kiraz 1993, 1923–1924), where it refers to the mistaken supposition that Joseph was Jesus' father (Luke 1:34–

35). Against Pines it is argued that the other aspects of Agapius's *Testimonium* that he considered to be less Christian-sounding than the *textus receptus*, such as its failure to refer to the Jewish leaders' role in Jesus' death, simply reflect linguistic idiosyncrasies or even errors in the exemplar of the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History* used by the Syriac chronicle that Agapius drew on as his main source (Whealey 2008, 585–587).

Another new development in the *Testimonium* controversy that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century is an attempt to address the question of style more systematically than in the past. The first author to closely examine the text's style was Charles Daubuz (ca. 1670–ca.1740), an English clergyman of Huguenot extraction, who demonstrated that some linguistic phrases in the *Testimonium* certainly had parallels elsewhere in Josephus's works (Whealey 2003, 141). A complete concordance of Josephus's works, which was first published in 1973 (Rengstorf 1973), confirmed this in greater depth, while also revealing that, as with many other ancient texts, there are some unique usages as well (Meier 1991, 80–87). Some of the parallels, such as “*hêdonêi...dechomenôn*” (*Ant.* 18.63), appear several times in Josephus's works, including in the same book where the *Testimonium* appears. Others, however, appear rarely or even only once, and in passages remote from the *Testimonium*. For example, Josephus uses the plural *Hellênes* well over a hundred times throughout his works but he uses the synonymous singular noun *to Hellênikon* for a Greek population in only one other place outside the *Testimonium* (*War* 2.268). It is much less probable that a forger would choose to imitate a *hapax legomenon* from a part of the lengthy Josephan corpus that is far removed from the supposedly fabricated passage rather than imitate an extremely common synonym found throughout Josephus's works, including near the passage in question. As one scholar queries, “Would a forger who evidently had a reasonable knowledge of Josephan style have chosen sometimes obscure Josephan phrases to carry out his aim?” (Carleton Paget 2001, 576). Serge Bardet cites style as one major reason for accepting the basic authenticity of the passage (2002, 228).

Even Louis Feldman, who seems considerably more skeptical than Bardet about the integrity of the *textus receptus* as a whole, has written, “that the text as we have it has a substratum of authentic material seems increasingly confirmed by stylistic studies of it” (Feldman 1984, 684).

If the passage is a total fabrication, the implication of such stylistic parallels is that it was a well-crafted one, and that it was made by someone familiar with some extremely obscure passages of Josephus's works. No writer before Eusebius of Caesarea evinces anything even approaching such familiarity with the works of Josephus (Schreckenberg 1972, 79–84; Whealey 2003, 6–13; 2007, 74–75; for Eusebius's use of Josephus, see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki in this volume). This raises the question whether, as Faber argued, Eusebius could have fabricated the *Testimonium*. One scholar has recently made a more

concerted attempt than earlier commentators to substantiate this thesis (Olson 1999), but many of his specific arguments are controverted by others (Carleton Paget 2001, 577–578; Inowlocki 2006, 207–209; Whealey 2007), and the overall thesis of fabrication by Eusebius has not been generally accepted in the scholarship.

One of its difficulties is that there is no known case of Eusebius, who quoted *verbatim* numerous other passages from many different texts, elsewhere fabricating out of whole cloth or completely rewriting a passage of comparable length. From what is known of his approach to quoting other passages, if Eusebius deliberately altered anything in the *Testimonium* at all, he is far more likely to have tweaked a few words, either by way of omission, addition, or substitution, than either completely rewriting or fabricating the entire passage (Inowlocki 2006, 48–57, 153–156, 206–220). Nor can Eusebius’s relative accuracy in quotation be dismissed as merely the result of medieval manuscript copyists’ harmonizing excerpted passages in his works with the same passages in their original texts. For example, Eusebius’s excerpts of two official documents accord with the wording of an inscription and a papyrus manuscript, both dating only a short time after their composition in the fourth century, that were excavated only in recent times, thus confirming his general reliability in quotation (Whealey 2007, 106 n. 90–91).

Another trend in recent scholarship that seems to have played a role in shifting the argument that the *Testimonium* is at least partly authentic more towards the scholarly mainstream is a greater awareness that Josephus was writing at a time when the attitudes of Christians and Jews, or less anachronistically church members and Jews outside the church, towards Jesus were not as far apart as they later would become. During the lifetime of Josephus, Jews composed several New Testament texts, and the church still included significant numbers of Jewish adherents. It follows from this that one cannot assume, as have so many early modern and modern commentators, that, in the first century, a Jew, even one of a priestly family (on Josephus and the priesthood, see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume), could not write as favorably about Jesus of Nazareth as does the *textus receptus* (Whealey 2003, 95–97, 101–102, 128, 130–131). Along somewhat similar lines, Bardet has argued that the passage is unlikely to have been fabricated out of whole cloth in part because its implicit Christology is too archaic and thus too much like Jewish Christianity to have been written by a Christian of the mainstream church after about 150 C.E. (2002, 229–230).

This sort of argument is even more cogent regarding Josephus’s passage about James the brother of Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200), the authenticity of which is in any case accepted by most contemporary scholars (Feldman 1984, 704–707), than it is regarding the *Testimonium*. Josephus’s portrait of James, his information about how, why, and when he died, and even about his relationship to Jesus is

too different from Christian traditions about James from about 150 C.E. onward, to have been interpolated by a Christian after that date. By the mid-second century most Christians maintained silence about Jesus' New Testament brothers altogether. Because of the growth of belief in Mary's perpetual virginity, if Christians from that period mentioned them at all, they used the theologically safe biblical title "brother of the Lord" (Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 9:5); or they qualified the term "brother" with phrases like "said to be"; or they explicitly denied that Jesus had had biological brothers at all by portraying them as stepbrothers or cousins (Whealey 2003, 2–5; 2007, 111–115). This reluctance to openly affirm that Jesus had brothers is incompatible with Christians interpolating a reference to James into *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200.

Those contemporary scholars who argue for the partial authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* should perhaps be divided among those who believe that the whole passage was significantly rewritten; those who would discard as interpolations three phrases ("if he should be called a man," "he was the Christ," and "the prophets having foretold these and many other marvels about him") but retain the language of the rest (Meier 1991, 80–91); and those, such as myself, who believe that textual evidence should be the only guide to reconstructing the original (Whealey 2003, 42–43; 2007, 107–108, 115–116). Accordingly, the only major alteration for which there is strong textual evidence is the substitution of "he was the Christ" for "he was thought to be the Christ."

22.6 Conclusion

The *Testimonium Flavianum* was first quoted *verbatim* in antiquity by Eusebius of Caesarea, who used it for modest anti-pagan apologetic purposes. Thereafter it was used for a variety of reasons, including anti-Jewish polemic; occasionally, however, it was cited with little or no comment, particularly by Christian chroniclers reworking material taken from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. The text was first labeled a forgery by some Christians in the late sixteenth century. Although the thesis of total fabrication was probably in the majority by the late nineteenth century, this opinion was never unanimous among critical scholars; many, pointing in particular to Jerome's ancient literal translation with the variant reading "he was believed to be the Christ" ("*credebatur esse Christus*"), argued that the phrase in the *textus receptus* "he was the Christ," and perhaps a few others, had been corrupted over time. By the late twentieth century, the view that the text was partly authentic gained scholarly ground: in part because stylistic studies revealed it to be closer to Josephus's language than was once assumed, and in part because scholars of the primitive church no longer assume that a Jew of priestly background—like

Josephus—could not have written in such a positive way about Jesus or those he attracted. The discovery that a literal Syriac translation of the text containing a phrase parallel to Jerome’s phrase reading “he was believed to be the Christ” reveals that there must once have been a Greek *Testimonium* with such a reading, and this has played a role in shifting the view that the text is at least partly authentic towards what seems to be a current scholarly consensus, with those scholars maintaining the thesis of complete fabrication becoming a minority, if still a significant one. After four hundred years, the controversy over the *Testimonium Flavianum* is still alive.

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FURTHER READING

An indispensable source for the citation of the *Testimonium Flavianum* in antiquity and the Middle Ages can be found in the index to Heinz Schrekenberg’s *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (1972). Alice Whealey’s *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (2003) surveys how the *Testimonium Flavianum* was used from the earliest citations to the present, and details the birth of a controversy over the text’s authenticity in the late Renaissance period. Her “The *Testimonium Flavianum* in Syriac and Arabic” (2008) is a necessary starting point for pursuing further research on the *Testimonium* in these languages. James Carleton Paget (2001) provides a very detailed and up-to-date discussion of twentieth-century scholarship on the question of the *Testimonium*’s authenticity. Louis Feldman’s *Josephus and Modern Scholarship* (1984) and *Josephus: A Supplemental Bibliography* (1986) very briefly but helpfully summarize the views of twentieth-century scholars on the question. Serge Bardet’s *Le Testimonium Flavianum* (2002) is an in-depth examination of twentieth-century French scholarly controversy over the text.

CHAPTER 23

Josephus and Patristic Literature

Sabrina Inowlocki

23.1 Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Flavius Josephus, the famous first-century Jewish historian and apologist, does not owe the survival of his works to the care of his fellow Jews but rather to the Christians (see Schreckenberg 1972, 1977, 1984, 1987, 1992; and Schreckenberg and Schubert 1992 as a whole). It is not until the tenth century that we see Jews re-engaging with his works through the *Sefer Yossipon* (Flusser 1987; see [Chapter 25](#) by Dönitz in this volume). By contrast, we have clear literary evidence of the Christian interest in Josephus dating back as early as the second century. This is not to say that Josephus left no trace in the Talmudic tradition or that he was not read by Greek-speaking Jews, or even by pagans in antiquity. It does, however, demonstrate the importance of the role that he played for early Christian intellectuals. As is often repeated, had it not been for the Christians, Flavius Josephus's works would be lost to us. However, our gratitude for their transmission should not blind us to the price paid for their preservation. As we shall see, Christian authors of the first centuries did not hesitate to misuse Josephus in order to support their own anti-Jewish positions. Paradoxically, it is at least in part this Christian anti-Judaism that assured the Christian interest in Josephus and the transmission of his works through the Middle Ages to the present. Therefore, the question of the Christian use of Josephus cannot be dealt with as a mere literary issue. It is part of a larger historical and theological problem that needs to be tackled with lucidity and candor.

In this study, I focus on a period extending from the second to the fifth century C.E. It is within this time frame that we can trace the beginnings of the Christian use, and abuse, of Josephus' works which became standard by the Middle Ages. I will not attempt to detail each author's treatment of the Jewish historian. I will rather provide a general picture of the Christian use of Josephus, focusing on the most representative passages. At the outset, it is important to deal with some preliminary questions such as the status conferred on Josephus by the early Christian authors as well as the extent of their knowledge of his works.

23.2 Josephus's Status in the Patristic Tradition

Josephus's status in the patristic tradition was deeply ambiguous. It is worth noting that this closely parallels the ambiguity of "Judaism" as constructed by the early Christian authors. On the one hand, these authors attempted to establish clear boundaries between their faith and that of the Jews; in their theological discourse, the Jews lost the divine election and Christians replaced them. On the other hand, they needed to demonstrate the kinship between themselves and the Jews in order to be able to refute the accusation of novelty made by pagan authors.

In the same way that Judaism was both claimed and rejected by the Christians, so was Josephus. For instance, Pseudo-Hegesippus (c. 370) in his *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* (*De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae*), a Latin revision of *Jewish War* (for an examination of Pseudo-Hegesippus, see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume), does not hesitate to praise him as a "truth-loving Jew" while at the same time criticizing his hardness of heart (*duritia cordis*) and disbelief in Christ (*perfidia*) (CSEL 66. 1, 3; 164). The Christian authors of the first centuries, while making it clear that Josephus was a Jew and not a Christian, attempted to integrate him into their tradition. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.18) and Jerome (*De vir.* 11), who frequently made use of his scholarship and apologetics, all defined him as a "Jew" or a "Hebrew," and yet included his biography and bibliography in their respective *Ecclesiastical History* (*Historia ecclesiastica*) and *On Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*). Jerome also compared him to the best historians of the Greco-Roman world, calling him a "Greek Livy" (*Letter* 22.35, *To Eustochium*, PL 22.420). Apart from Philo, Josephus is the only non-Christian figure to have entered these works. Through this inclusion, he became part and parcel of the Christian tradition, to the extent that he was occasionally mentioned as a "fifth gospel" (Schreckenberg 1987, 317). Basil of Caesarea (330–379) even goes so far as to say that Josephus composed his Jewish history "for us" (i.e., the Christians) (*Homilia dicta tempore famis et siccitatis*, PG 31. 324).

Yet it would be a mistake to say that Josephus himself was christianized in the patristic tradition in the same way Philo of Alexandria who was labeled as "Philo the bishop" in medieval *catenae* (Runia 1993, 3). Josephus was never turned into a Christian *stricto sensu*, even though his historical-theological discourse was christianized. The reason for the tension between his identity as an historical figure and his works can be easily explained: for his testimony to remain valid and useful, the Church Fathers needed him to remain a Jew. In this way, he could not be accused of partiality with regard to Christianity. He was a legitimate witness because he was an outsider, or even more so, since he belonged to an opposing group. Isidore of Pelusium's testimony confirms this hypothesis:

For in order that no one find the account of their [the Jews] unbelievable and incomprehensible suffering incredible, the truth raised up, not a non-Jew—for perhaps then one might be forced to doubt—but, much more, one of their own faith who was zealous, to present that unprecedented suffering in an impressive way, in dramatic form.

(*Epistula* 4.75, PG 78.1136)

This is also true as far as biblical scholarship is concerned. In many cases, his authority lay with his Jewishness, especially since he claimed to be of priestly descent, which implied an expertise in *Judaica*.

23.3 How Well Did the Christian Authors Know Josephus?

The extent of the Church Fathers' knowledge of the Josephan text is open to discussion (Hardwick 1989). In most cases, it is impossible to identify the text they used with the different extant manuscripts, not only because they most likely had access to different texts, but also because they occasionally felt free to tamper with them (cf. the issue of the *Testimonium Flavianum*). Moreover, some of them were using Josephus's work without referring to him explicitly (e.g., Jerome), while others were content to mention him by name, without really using his work (e.g., Ambrose). How well these authors in fact knew Josephus is difficult to assess. While it may be that some had only a superficial knowledge of Josephus's writings, it may also be the case that his works were readily available in Christian circles. Superficial references could have been due to a language barrier; for example, Ambrose and Augustine may have only vaguely referred to him for this reason (Schrekenberg 1972, 88 ff. 96 ff.; 1992, 74, 79). In other cases, it is difficult to be sure that Josephus was used first-hand (see the case of Melito of Sardis, below, and of Hippolytus; on Hippolytus, see Schrekenberg's summary 1992, 56).

However, some of the Fathers did quote him extensively. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea (267–339) played a major role in the transmission of *Jewish War*, as he cites significant sections of it in his *Ecclesiastical History*, claiming he does so directly. The text that he seems to have used is closer to the manuscripts considered inferior by Niese (Leoni 2009, 154; on the manuscript tradition, see [Chapter 20](#) by Leoni in this volume). Yet Eusebius's quotations antedate the extant manuscripts of Josephus.

The Church Fathers' translations are also important, not only when reconstructing Josephus's text, but also for understanding its Christian reception and interpretation. For example, in the second half of the fourth

century, a Latin translation of *Jewish War* was ascribed to Rufinus of Aquileia, or Ambrose, or Jerome (Cassiodorus, *Institutions* 1.17) (on Latin translations of Josephus, see [Chapter 21](#) by Levenson and Martin in this volume) while Pseudo-Hegesippus offered a free paraphrase in the *De excidio*. Jerome received a commission to translate *Jewish War* into Latin, although he never produced it (*Letter* 71.5, PL 22, 671). It is not until the middle of the sixth century that we see the completion of the Latin translation of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion* by Cassiodorus. This indicates the preeminence of *Jewish War* over *Jewish Antiquities* for Christians, the reasons for which will be explained below. *Jewish War* came to occupy a prominent place in the Eastern world as well. In the Syrian Vulgate, the sixth book was added under the title *Fifth Book of the Maccabees*. The translation appears to date from the fourth or the fifth century (Schreckenberg 1992, 74–75). Let us now turn to the main question of this study.

23.4 Christian Use of Josephus

Josephus's status as a prominent figure in patristic literature can be explained in two ways: First, certain ways that the Christian authors made use of his works can justify his popularity (we will return to this in [Section 23.4.1](#)). Second, the presence of passages related to Christianity (some of them being spurious).

The passage, known as the *Testimonium Flavianum* from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (18.63–64), includes mention of Jesus of Nazareth, calling him Christ (*christos*) and summarizing his deeds as a teacher and miracle-worker (see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). It is of utmost importance to the study of the historical Jesus and early Christianity because it is the only non-Christian, first-century testimony about the existence of Jesus. However, the authenticity of this passage has been much debated since the sixteenth century. The general laudatory tone of the passage, as well as claims such as Jesus “was the Christ,” have led to the suspicion that it was a Christian interpolation. Moreover, although all manuscripts of Josephus attest the passage, and Eusebius knew it (*Hist. eccl.* 1.11; *Dem. evan.* 3.5.105, *Theophany* 5.44), Origen did not. The main debate has not focused on whether the passage had been interpolated, but to what extent and how it has been interpolated (Bardet 2002, defends the authenticity of the whole passage basing his analysis on a study of Jewish Christianity). Even today there is no real consensus in modern scholarship. Recently, the old theory that Eusebius forged the passage has been revived (Olson 1999) based on a new linguistic and critical study, but this has not found support among scholars (e.g., Carleton Paget 2001; Whealey 2007). In the last decade, scholars critically examining the *Testimonium* through the lens of the history have substantially

expanded the ideas of the five-centuries-old debate (Bardet 2002; Whealey 2003).

The *Testimonium* gained so much importance in Christian literature that it can be assumed it played an important role in the preservation of the Josephan corpus in the Christian tradition. But, as we shall see, this is not the only reason.

The Christian authors' use of Josephus's writings was multi-faceted and can be divided into three main categories:

1. Josephus was an invaluable source in biblical matters. He could provide extra-biblical information and fill gaps regarding both the world of the Old Testament (of which *Jewish Antiquities* are a paraphrase) and that of the New Testament (of which he was contemporary). For example, Christian authors used his *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion* in their chronographical and exegetical endeavors.
2. Josephus was a source for apologetic arguments that could be used to defend Christianity against pagan critics. One of the main arguments in favor of Christianity was its antiquity, which Christian authors could claim thanks to a constructed kinship with Moses and the Old Testament. Josephus provided useful passages on the subject of Jewish antiquity in his defense of Judaism, especially in his *Against Apion*.
3. Josephus became the key witness for Christian demonstration of the divine punishment of the Jews, the end of their election, and their replacement by the Christians.

23.4.1 Josephus's Biblical Exegesis

Let us begin with Josephus as a source for biblical exegesis. Josephus's works, especially *Jewish Antiquities*, were much used in early Christian literature because they provided additional information on the biblical text. For example, as early as the end of the second century, Irenaeus mentions Moses's Ethiopian campaign from the account in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.* 2.238–253; fr. 32 PG 7.1245). On several occasions, Origen alludes to Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* as confirming his own interpretation; for example, when dealing with the text of 2 Kings 23:34, he says that "Josephus also says so in the tenth book of the *Antiquities*" (*Selected Fragments on Jeremiah* 3; Mizugaki 1987, 331). The precision of this reference is worth noting. Jerome also uses Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* extensively (particularly *Ant.* 1 in *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*) but he often omitted the name of his source, especially when quoting Greek authors cited by the Jewish historian (Bardy 1948, 184). Other Latin Fathers used, or at

least referred to, Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*: for example, Augustine (*City of God* 8.45.2–3) and Orosius (*History against the Pagans* 7.5; 9). Theodoret of Cyrillus also exploited Josephus for exegetical purposes and Schreckenberg notes, "Theodoret rates his value as a witness very high, but as a rule makes critical use of him" (see Schreckenberg 1972, 98; 1977, 16; 1984, 1181; 1992, 82–83).

It is mainly in relation to the New Testament that Josephus served the Christians best (see Mason 2003; see Chapter 9 by Bond in this volume). Josephus provided them with material to supplement the New Testament narrative. Additional information on the figures of John the Baptist, James, brother of Jesus, and Jesus himself (see above on the *Testimonium*) could be extracted from the Jewish historian. On several occasions, Eusebius used Josephus's passage on John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–117) according to which some Jews ascribed the defeat of Herod's army to his murder of John (*Dem. evan.* 9. 5; *Hist. eccl.* 1.11). Occasionally, Josephus's testimony may have been interpolated by Christians (i.e., the *Testimonium*). This may also be the case with other texts that may not have survived. We will see below that Origen may have used such a passage on James the Just.

Some of Josephus's writings were used to support both Old and New Testament prophecies. For example, the prophecy of doom in Luke 21:20–24 is confirmed by Josephus, according to Eusebius in *Theophany* 4.20–22. In Eusebius's view, Josephus's narrative of the suffering of the Jewish people and the destruction of the temple demonstrated the fulfillment of these prophecies.

With regard to Old Testament prophecies, this was also the case. For instance, Origen regarded the whole Book of Lamentations as referring to the devastation of 70 C.E., which he believes Josephus accurately recounts (*Fr. in Lam.* 105, see also 109). In particular, Lamentations 4:10 is interpreted through Josephus's narrative of the *teknophagia* of Mary (*War* 6.199–219), which relates the horrific story of a mother driven by famine to eat her own child (see Chapman 2000).

Likewise, Jerome, in *On Daniel* and *On Ezekiel*, copiously referred to *Jewish War*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Against Apion* (Schreckenberg 1972, 93–94). In particular, when he deals with the destruction of Jerusalem from Ezekiel 5, he openly resorts to Josephus to provide the historical narrative referred to in the prophecies (*In Hiezechielem* II. 5. 1–4, CCSL 75.55).

In interpretations of both the Old and New Testaments, Josephus becomes the cornerstone for works that can be referred to as "apologetic hermeneutics." He not only provides historical or narrative details about the events recounted in the Bible, but also serves to support a strong anti-Jewish theological reinterpretation of historical events. In this context, biblical interpretation and apologetic-polemic arguments are closely intertwined. Inasmuch as both the

Old and the New Testaments predicted the punishment of the Jews, Josephus's works became an intermediary of sorts, capable of unlocking the connection between these testaments.

23.4.2 Josephus and Christian Anti-Pagan Apologetics

Let us now turn to the role he played in Christian debates with the pagans. In early Christian literature, Josephus functioned not only as a major source from which to derive material to employ in anti-Jewish polemics, but he was also useful for Christian apologetics against charges made by pagans. The pagans accused the Christians of embracing novelty while abandoning their ancestral cults and philosophy. In response, Christian apologists set out to demonstrate that Christianity was in fact an older—and therefore more legitimate—philosophy than paganism. They connected Christianity with Judaism whose ancient biblical past provided legitimate evidence of antiquity. Moses played a prominent role in this discourse since he was a well-known figure in the Greco-Roman world (see Gager 1972). Jewish apologists, and in particular Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, had already demonstrated the antiquity of Judaism and its legislator, which could be easily adopted by Christian apologists.

Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180) in *To Autolochus* (3.21–22, 25, 29) is the first to use *Against Apion* against pagan critics, citing it in order to prove the antiquity of Christianity (Hardwick 1989, 9–19). Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 1.21.147. 2) and Julius Africanus (d. after 240 C.E.) use Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* in their attempt to construct a Christian history dating back to the creation of the world and Moses, proving (directly or indirectly) the antiquity of their philosophy. Pseudo-Justin (fourth century?), in his *Exhortation to the Greeks* (*Cohortatio ad Graecos*, PG 6. 257, 261, 268) mentions Josephus and *Jewish Antiquities* as witnesses to the antiquity of Moses, as does Tertullian (*Apology* 19) and Origen (*C. Cels.* 1.16).

Eusebius, in *Preparation for the Gospel* (Books 8, 9, and 10) abundantly quote Josephus in order to prove that the Greeks knew and praised Moses and his law, as well as the antiquity of the Jews. On several occasions (*Praep. evan.* 9. 9, 11, 13–16; 10. 7) he used *Against Apion* and *Jewish Antiquities* as sources for other writers (e.g., Clearchus and Ps.-Hecataeus) without acknowledging his primary source, i.e., Josephus (Inowlocki 2006). His complimentary account of the ancient Jewish biblical past is clearly highly apologetic. It is meant to present the pre-history of the New Israel in the most favorable light. As with Pseudo-Justin and Tertullian, Eusebius often associates Josephus's testimony with that of Philo of Alexandria. These two authors become, in Late Antiquity, the two Jewish pillars of Christian

23.4.3 Josephus and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic

If Josephus's works were used to help the Christians defend their faith against pagan attacks, it is against the Jews that he was employed most enthusiastically, especially *Jewish War*. Although some early authors (e.g., Theophilus of Antioch) knew about this work, it is not until the third century that Christian authors started to see the importance of the historical-theological argument they could draw from this narrative. In particular, the account of the fall of Jerusalem was to play a crucial role in their development of anti-Jewish supersessionist theology. From this period, the idea that the fall of Jerusalem was a punishment for the Jewish rejection and murder of Christ spread and it became central to Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric. In Josephus's major writings, *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, the Christian Fathers found material they used to support this belief. Needless to say, Josephus never states, or even implies, that the Jews were punished by God for the murder of Christ. His anti-rebel stance provided them with a model for their own anti-Judaism (Schreckenberg 1987, 319).

Origen was first to use Josephus's *Jewish War* for anti-Jewish purposes. Indeed, he employed this work to support his theology of punishment. For him, there was a direct connection between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish rejection of Jesus: the Jews were punished by God for their behavior towards the Christ, and this punishment is recorded in detail and confirmed by the Jew Josephus (see e.g., *Fr. in Lam.* 105, *C. Cels* 1. 47; 2.13). In *Against Celsus* and in *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen takes pains to quote an alleged passage from Josephus, according to which the fall of Jerusalem was due to the murder of "James the Just, brother of the so-called Christ" (*C. Cels* 1.47, 2.13; *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17). Josephus's purported statement about James is found nowhere in the extant manuscripts. Yet it entered the Christian tradition through its later use by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23), who most likely borrowed it from Origen. While there are several explanations as to the source of Origen's citation, of concern here is the way in which Origen uses this passage he assumes comes from Josephus.

It may be suggested that this allegedly Josephan passage led Origen to the conception of his theology of punishment. He appropriates the 'Josephan' idea, but in his opinion, Josephus should have connected the fall of Jerusalem to the murder of Jesus Christ, not to James. Nevertheless Josephus was "not far from the truth" even though he "should have said" that the city was destroyed because of the Jewish plot against Christ (*C. Cels* 1.47). In spite of Josephus's supposed error, Origen presented him as a thorough historian (Mizugaki 1987, 329), ushering in a long tradition of citing Josephus in an

anti-Jewish context.

Other Josephan passages were alluded to by Origen, notably the *teknophagia* of Mary (fr. 105 *In Lamentationes* 4:10; see Mizugaki 1987, 331–332). This passage was to become iconic for the description of Jewish suffering in Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric. Before Origen, Melito of Sardis (d. c. 190) apparently had used it. In his *On the Passion* (*Peri Pascha* 52), he almost certainly referred to it in a passage where he deals with the destruction of mankind by sin (Chapman 2000). However, he did not connect it directly to Jewish behavior towards Christ.

From Origen onwards, the miseries that befell the Jews in 70 C.E., as recounted by Josephus, became proof of the truth and triumph of Christianity. The argument that Judaism perished and the Jews as a people were destroyed after 70 C.E., far from being historical, is essentially apologetic and polemic. In spite of the Christian claims, the Jews did not disappear after 70 C.E.; they continued to live and flourish in the Roman Empire. In fact, as we will see with John Chrysostom, in some regions of the Mediterranean world, they clearly posed a threat to Christians.

In the Latin world too, Christian authors resorted to Josephus's authority to show that the Roman war against the Jews was a divine punishment. For example, Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 33. 4, c. 210) connected the destruction of the Jews with their lack of piety, using Josephus as a "Roman" witness for this view, but he does not mention Jesus Christ.

If Origen initiated anti-Jewish apologetics based on Josephus, Eusebius brought it to its zenith: in his *Ecclesiastical History*, as well as in the *Preparation for the Gospel* and *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius used Josephus's works extensively (Hardwick 1989). Unlike Origen, who avoided citations, he copiously quoted the Jewish historian and claimed to do so literally (Inowlocki 2006). By using these lengthy citations, he considerably developed Origen's work and Eusebius constitutes a landmark in the Christian use of Josephus. He was the first Christian author to fully recognize the large extent to which Josephus could be used to serve the Christian cause. He understood how Josephus's works could be used to connect Old Testament prophecies of doom with the New Testament, and he made Josephus one of the cornerstones of his salvation history. Eusebius's use of Josephus's citations is certainly far from being unbiased. By modifying their original meaning, through semantic distortions, textual cuts or modifications, Eusebius often deliberately tampered with Josephus's text and its meaning. His citation methods enabled him to manipulate Josephus's passages and distort the original intention of the author; he turned Josephus's works into polemical weapons against the Jews and reinforced the Christian anti-Jewish tradition of using Josephus, which had started with Origen.

Indeed, under the Caesarean bishop's pen, Josephus unintentionally provided

the newly constructed Christian orthodoxy with its master narrative on the terrible ending of the Jews and Judaism. In Josephus's writing, Eusebius found not only the historical accounts legitimizing his theological arguments, but also testimonies of divine signs announcing the fall of the city and graphic tales of Jewish suffering during the war. Eusebius is also an important witness for the *Testimonium Flavianum* and he quotes it no less than three times (*Dem. evan.* 3.5; *Hist. eccl.* 1.11. 7–8; *Theophany* 5.44).

Eusebius used Josephus extensively in an apologetic context in order to demonstrate the decay of the Jewish temple and its institutions. Josephan passages on the election of high priests, their succession, and their garments are used to confirm the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, such as Daniel 9:20–27 (Inowlocki 2006, 282–283). As we have seen, other biblical oracles were also analyzed in the light of his punishment theology. The portents related by Josephus that predicted the fall of Jerusalem and its temple (e.g., *Ant.* 18.55) were directly reused by Eusebius to confirm the end of Judaism. The graphic tale of the *teknophagia* of Mary, told by the Jewish historian (*War* 6.199–219; see *Hist. eccl.* 3.6; Chapman 1998), provided an interpretation of this tragedy, which he could use to theatricalize his arguments. He most likely adopted from Origen the alleged Josephan claim that the siege of Jerusalem was due to the Jewish crime against James, brother of Jesus (*Hist. eccl.* 2. 23). In the same way, Eusebius cites *Jewish Antiquities* 18.116–117 on John the Baptist (*Dem. evan.* 9. 5, *Hist. eccl.* 1.11): according to this passage, it is his murder by Herod Antipas that caused the defeat of the latter's army. Even if Eusebius never directly ascribed to Josephus the idea that the Jewish crime against Jesus was the cause of Jewish suffering, it is obvious that this type of passage provides the ground for his own theological ideas about the punishment of the Jews, inspired by Origen's model.

After Eusebius, and probably partly because of him, Josephus was favored in Christian arguments against the Jews and Judaism. Around 370, Pseudo-Hegesippus's Latin paraphrase of the Greek *Jewish War* appeared (see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). This text was preserved among the writings of Ambrose. The main point of the work is to demonstrate that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was due to the rejection and killing of Jesus. As Bell (1987, 353–354) has pointed out, Pseudo-Hegesippus goes further than any of his fellow Christians by claiming that God took the initiative in destroying the Jews. It is worth noting that it is important to the author that Josephus was a “real Jew,” i.e., a disbeliever, because this reinforces the credibility of his testimony. Indeed, “he does no disadvantage to the truth with his unbelief, but rather strengthens his testimony” (CSEL 66.1, 164).

For John Chrysostom (d. c. 407), Josephus's narrative on the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was not a confirmation of the end of Judaism and his silence on the rebuilding of the temple was proof for John that it would not

happen. Josephus is transformed into a sort of prophet whose testimony was both theologically and historically valid. Though for Chrysostom Josephus remained a Jew, “he did not emulate your [the Jews’] contentious maliciousness” (PG 48, 897). Here we see how a contemporary religious issue (Julian’s plan to rebuild the temple), much feared by the Christians but much desired by some Jews (Wilken 1983), is polemicized by reference to Josephus. What is also remarkable here is that it is not only Josephus’s words, but also his silence, which is put to use in the controversy with the Jews. Once again, the Jewish historian unintentionally provides arguments against his fellow Jews. Chrysostom also stressed the tragic character of the Jewish fate, notably through his use of the *teknophagia* of Mary (*Commentary on Matthew* PG 58, 695). In Chrysostom’s view, Josephus not only wrote history, he wrote tragedy. He recognized that Josephus presented a tragic narrative in his *Jewish War* (Chapman 1998).

After the fourth century, references to Josephus’s testimony on the destruction of Jerusalem almost became a *topos* among the Fathers, who followed in the steps of Origen and Eusebius. Even in the Latin world, Augustine (d. 430) was so impressed by Josephus’s account of Jewish miseries during the war that he said they hardly looked credible (*Epistula ad Hesychium* 199, 30; CSEL 57.270). Most of the fifth-century authors who mentioned Josephus present his testimony in *Jewish War* as the historical narrative of Jewish punishment for the murder of Christ: Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) (e.g., *On Zechariah* 12.11–14; PG 72, 225; for more, see Schreckenberg 1992, 80–81), Prosper of Aquitaine (d. after 455), and Fulgentius (fifth century) (see Schreckenberg 1992, 81–82) embraced this anti-Jewish *topos*.

Thus, Josephus’s narrative in *Jewish War* progressively outshone his other works in the Christian world and his appropriation in anti-Jewish polemics became widespread among the Fathers. Simultaneously, his characterization as a “lover of truth” (Schreckenberg 1984, 1164) became generalized, for apologetic reasons. His narrative was so important that its credibility needed to be enhanced (e.g., Isidore of Pelusium, d. 435, *Epistula* 4.75, PG 78, 1136; cf. *Epistula* 4.225, PG 78, 1320).

Among the different passages used by Christian authors, the narrative of Mary’s cannibalism became iconic in the Christian world. Not only because it was considered as the culmination of the horrors experienced by the Jews during the war, but also because it could easily be interpreted as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, such as that in Lamentations (4:10). Needless to say, the Christian writers never suggested that Josephus may have been influenced by these biblical tales! For them, and for obvious polemic reasons, Josephus was only faithfully describing historical events that proved the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The cruelty and the monstrosity of this story became iconic in the punishment theology constructed by the Christians.

23.5 Conclusion

As Schreckenberg has pointed out, “New Testament, Old Testament, and Josephus form a relational triangle” (1992, 85) to the point that it may not be an exaggeration to speak of a canonization of Josephus in the early Christian centuries. Josephus was used both as an intermediary between the Old and the New Testaments and as the continuation of the New. The consequences of the manipulative Christian appropriation of *Jewish War* were deep and long-lasting. In the manuscript tradition of Josephus, and up to the classical edition of his works by Niese at the end of the nineteenth century, *Jewish War*, named *Conquest (Halôsis)* by the Christians, was placed after *Jewish Antiquities*, even though it was an earlier work. The reason is that the fall of the Jews, as described in crude detail by Josephus, was now widely understood by the Christians as the historical ending of the Jewish history told in *Jewish Antiquities*. This terrible ending was seen as the logical consequence of the Jewish rejection and even murder of Jesus Christ (Schreckenberg 1987, 317).

The Christian polemical use of his war narrative—initiated by Origen and culminating with Eusebius and popularized after him—is contemporaneous with the “parting of the ways” between Jews and Christians. As the boundaries between these two groups became clearer and more definite, the punishment theology sketched by Origen gained importance in Christian thought. As we have seen, Josephus played a crucial role here. After the triumph of Christian “orthodoxy” over paganism in the fourth century, Josephus continued to be a source for biblical exegesis, but it is mainly in his capacity as a witness to Jewish suffering and punishment that he triumphed in the Christian world.

Josephus’s treatment in Christian literature is typical of the appropriation of Jewish traditions and texts by the Christians in the first centuries of the Common Era. The fate of Josephus’s texts is to some extent similar to that of the Hebrew Bible, adopted as the “Old Testament” by Christians. Similarly the Christians appropriated Josephus’s writings, betraying his intentions and the purpose he ascribes to his works. In this case, the complicated textual transmission of Josephus’s works makes it impossible to assess to what extent Christian copyists and authors tampered with Josephus’s original text. It may also be suggested that it is precisely this Christian tampering which makes the textual history of the manuscripts so complicated. This is particularly true if we take into account the variety of beliefs and practice in the early Christian communities whose members may have had access to the manuscripts.

The examination of the reception of Josephus’s text seems to suggest that in most cases, Christian authors did not seriously interpolate Josephus’s text (as they may have done, however, with the *Testimonium* or the passage on James

quoted by Origen). They occasionally omitted a word or changed a phrase but they did not extensively tamper with the text, mainly because it was not necessary. Josephan passages could be easily appropriated. The *teknophagia* of Mary, for example, once integrated into the Christian theology of punishment, did not need to be modified. Many other episodes, taken out of their context could be given a new, Christian, polemical meaning. This was the real “abuse and misuse of Josephus” (cf. Hata 2007). Christian figures, such as Origen and Eusebius, who contributed to a large extent to the fashioning of Christian intellectual history, consciously misused Josephus. They knew he was not a believer in Christ, they knew he was an apologist for Judaism, yet they turned him into a powerful weapon against his fellow Jews. As such, traditional literary analysis of the Christian use of Josephus (as was done in the past, e.g., Bardy 1948) is unsatisfactory. From the third and fourth centuries onwards, this deliberate manipulation of Josephus’s works against his own community was a remarkably well-thought out process. In this respect, the history of the transmission of Josephus’s works is as tragic as his narrative of the war. Josephus has been misused in Christian literature, and by a sad “*ironie de l’histoire*,” he became a formidable weapon against the very same culture and people he had attempted to defend. From this point of view, the long-debated question of whether or not Josephus betrayed his people during the war of 70 C.E. is irrelevant. The only betrayal of the Jewish people that can be attributed to Josephus took place centuries later when he unintentionally and unknowingly became part of the Christian anti-Jewish polemics.

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FURTHER READING

Feldman and Hata, eds. (1987), contains important articles on the christian reception of Josephus, notably in Origen, Pseudo-Hegesippus, and the Byzantine world, as well as on the martyrdom of James. It also includes a general article on the subject by Schrekenberg.

Hardwick (1989), provides the reader with useful textual comparisons between Josephus's text and the quotations and allusions in the Church Fathers. However, it needs to be supplemented by the work of Schrekenberg, who delves deeper into the historical and theological implications of the subject.

Inowlocki (2006), focuses—among other Jewish writers—on the reception of Josephus in Eusebius's *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio evangelica*.

Mason (2003), second edition, provides an important treatment of the reception of Josephus in early Christianity, especially Chapter 1, "The Use and Abuse of Josephus." Schrekenberg's work (1972, 1977, 1984, 1987, and 1992) is the most important and his immense knowledge of the subject make his scholarship essential.

CHAPTER 24

The Christian Reception of Josephus in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages

Karen M. Kletter

24.1 Introduction

The Latin translations of Flavius Josephus were widely known and used throughout Western Christendom in the Middle Ages. Three works make up the received text of the “Latin Josephus”: *Against Apion*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Jewish War*. All three works sometimes traveled together within the same manuscript or manuscript set, but it was the latter two that were the most influential in the Middle Ages. Over two hundred extant manuscripts, entries in medieval booklists, and excerpts in florilegia, confirm that these components of the Latin Josephus were accessible (Blatt 1958, 25–113; on the Latin translations, see [Chapter 21](#) by Levenson and Martin in this volume). Citations from and references to Josephus’s histories in Christian exegetical and historical works, as well as marginalia in Josephan manuscripts, tell us that there was consistent interest in specific aspects of these works. This interest is also revealed in other ways. Scenes from, and themes related to, Josephus’s histories were adopted into Latin and vernacular literary material and included in the programs of illustration of other kinds of manuscripts, particularly, but not exclusively, biblical manuscripts (Schreckenberg and Schubert 1992, 87–130). It might reasonably be claimed that no Jewish works outside of the biblical texts enjoyed as extensive a readership, or had as profound an influence on Christian thought and identity, as the works of Josephus. Yet, despite the ubiquity of his influence, there has been little done in the way of systematic studies of the use of Josephan works or the nature and constitution of Josephan authority in Christendom during the Middle Ages.

Perhaps Christian interest in Josephus has too often seemed self-evident. Modern readers might point to the brief passage known as the *Testimonium Flavianum* in Book 18 of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* as the chief reason for their preservation in Christian tradition (for a full discussion of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). The *Testimonium* (*Ant.* 18.63–64), first noted in the fourth century in Eusebius of Caesarea’s (d. 339) *Ecclesiastical History*, describes a wise man named Jesus, enumerates his deeds, and refers to him as the Messiah. In medieval

manuscripts, even the most austere, this passage is highlighted by flourishes and often rubricized. In truly luxurious manuscripts, the text of the *Testimonium* is decorated elaborately and colorfully. Lists of contents at the opening of Book 18 are also often adorned so as to call attention to the importance of the contents of its third chapter (Liebl 1997, 44–46). The passage may stand alone in compilation manuscripts or be included in extracts and summaries. The authenticity of all or part of the *Testimonium*, long a subject of controversy, is irrelevant to this discussion, and a survey of the medieval Christian use of Josephus's histories suggests that readers valued them for a very broad range of reasons, not all of which were directly related to the *Testimonium* or to the perceived viciousness of the Jews.

At the same time, surely one of the most important purposes Josephus's works served in medieval Christian learned and popular traditions was to offer an independent and ostensibly detached storyline that worked out any historical difficulties with supersession. They revealed the fulfillment of biblical prophecies regarding the eradication of the cultic center of Judaism, Jerusalem, and its temple. For his contemporary Jewish readers, Josephus highlighted correlations between the Roman assault and the predictions of Hebrew prophets. He portrayed himself trying to persuade his co-religionists to surrender to the Romans on these grounds (*War* 6.109–110). His account of the siege and destruction accentuates these parallels, dwelling on the descriptions of violence, murder, cannibalism, and suicide that occurred among the Jews of Jerusalem and other cities. Medieval Christians tended to look to Jesus' prophecy in Luke regarding the temple's destruction, but, of course, also appreciated the correspondences between the words of the Hebrew prophets and the events of the destruction of 70 C.E. that Josephus underlined. One scene in *Jewish War*, that of the starving, desperate mother who roasts and eats her own child during the darkest days of the siege, drew particular attention in Christian learned and popular contexts, and was the most often illustrated of all the episodes recounted in Josephus's histories (*War* 6.199–219; Deutsch 1986, 179).

Josephus's analysis of the events of 70 C.E. was shaped by a number of factors (for a full examination of Josephus's treatment of the war and the destruction of Jerusalem, see [Chapter 1](#) by Mason on *Judean War* in this volume). He asserted in *Jewish War* that the revolt against Roman rule was promoted only by a small group of rebels, and that its failure was both inevitable and divinely justified. But Josephus did not, of course, explain the end of Jewish Jerusalem as retribution for the rejection and killing of Jesus, yet his account came to be understood in this way and his name synonymous with the event. *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War* were also, in effect, Roman histories, though their uses as Roman histories were highly specific. They were employed to coordinate chronologies of biblical and Roman history, but recorded the role that the Romans played in the end of Jewish Jerusalem (on

Josephus as a Roman historian, see [Chapter 5](#) by Mason, and [Chapter 2](#) by Schwartz on *Jewish Antiquities* in this volume). Thus, Josephus's works helped define the nexus of ancient Roman, Jewish, and Christian history. Christian re-workings of the story emphasized the profound ties between Romans and Christians, ties that, in the Middle Ages, would develop a view of pre-Constantinian Rome as Christian or proto-Christian.

For medieval Christian scholars, Josephus's acceptability and authority were inextricably linked to his associations with Christian intellectual patriarchs who had more or less made these works of Jewish history canonical. The period from the fourth to the seventh centuries was an intellectual turning point in both West and East, a period characterized by the translation and transference of Greek and Jewish theological and historical material to the West. Included in this material were not only Josephus's works, but also those of Christian authors, such as Origen and Eusebius, who modeled the uses of Josephan texts and identified their most essential contents. Many medieval readers were guided by the Latin translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. The translations of *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion* are associated with a great patron of the transmission of this material to the Latin West: Cassiodorus (d. c.585). From Late Antiquity, translations of Josephus were attributed to Jerome. The writings of these early revered authors and translators had a significant impact on the choices medieval librarians and book collectors made when acquiring manuscripts (on Josephan manuscripts, see [Chapter 20](#) by Leoni in this volume). Especially important was Cassiodorus's *Institutes of Divine and Secular Literature* (*Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*), a broad program of Christian learning that included both sacred and secular literature (Webber 1992, 34–37; McKitterick 2004, 45–46, 192).

24.2 Late Antique Christian Exegetes and Historians

For Christian exegetes and historians, Jewish material formed the basis of a complete Christian history and *Jewish War* was seen as an appendix to the New Testament. Both of Josephus's histories were frequently placed on medieval booklists next to the Eusebius-Rufinus *Ecclesiastical History* and its continuation, the *Historia Tripartita*. *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War* were important exegetical tools that could offer exceptional insights into the text of the Hebrew Bible, and even supplement it. These works enhanced the biblical descriptions of, for example, the life of Moses, the Tabernacle, and the workings of the First Temple, and were authoritative sources for geographical and etymological information. They were indispensable for elucidating the literal sense of scripture, and reinforced the understanding of the history of the

Bible as well as the notion of the Bible as history. Josephus's knowledge of the text of the Septuagint as well as variants of the Hebrew biblical text offered alternate readings that might challenge the Vulgate or be used to establish a different reading of the text. Josephus's historical works helped shape exempla that drew on pagan as well as biblical history, and reported details related to the roles, characters, and qualities of, among others, Solomon, Alexander the Great, and Herod. Josephus's histories served as important models for genres that became distinctively Christian, such as apologetics and universal history, for which they also provided content.

A hallmark of the earliest Christian uses of Josephus's works was its application to apologetics, a genre whose importance decreased as Christianity gained status in the Roman Empire, thus explaining the diminished influence of *Against Apion*. However, there is apologetic content in all of Josephus's works. In *Jewish Antiquities*, he ascribed to Jewish patriarchs the invention, establishment, or preservation of certain arts, sciences, and crafts to assert the antiquity of Jewish religious and intellectual traditions in relation to the Greek, traditions to which Christians could claim to be the most authentic heirs. This feature of Christian interest in Josephus's works, though transformed, never disappeared. Josephus's assertions were repeated in influential works such as Isidore of Seville's (d. 636) *Chronicles* and *Etymologies*, and made their way into later medieval biblical glosses and schoolbooks.

Medieval readers of Josephus in the Latin West inherited a complex legacy of the incorporation of these works into their received history. Numerous factors might influence or to some extent control the way any single given text or collection of works was used or read in the Middle Ages. These factors included not only the influence of esteemed earlier scholars, but also the transmission of summarizations, extracts and adaptations of a work, later accretions to a text, and the dissemination of falsely attributed works. Among the altered or edited material from Josephus's works that circulated in the Middle Ages, none was as influential as the fourth-century reworking of *Jewish War* usually referred to as *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem* (*De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae*). This work was often credited to Josephus, and the relationship between the two was ambiguous. Sometimes it is difficult for a modern reader to distinguish whether details of an account of the destruction were derived from the original or *De excidio*, whose authority came from its association or confusion with *Jewish War*. A handful of Josephus manuscripts include *De excidio*, and the work is attributed to Josephus in some medieval book lists. *De excidio* came to be viewed as a Christian emendation of *Jewish War*, with additions from *Jewish Antiquities* and Latin Christian and classical authors. By the ninth century, it had become firmly but mistakenly associated with the second-century Greek apologist Hegesippus, and so is often referred to as the Pseudo-Hegesippus. It was

widely believed in the Middle Ages to have been translated by Ambrose (d. 397), an attribution which appears on some manuscripts (Bell 1987, 349–361).

Pseudo-Hegesippus followed the outline of Josephus's account, though the description of the siege and destruction are somewhat compressed. *De excidio* is a tale of Christian triumphalism and a narrative of divine retribution. Its author shaped his story around the theme of sanctified vengeance, a useful concept if one wanted to fit Josephus's story into the arc of sacred history. *De excidio* is also deeply political. One of its purposes seems to be to describe the rise and fall of Israel as a polity, though much of the detail Josephus included regarding the complex situation between Jewish factions within Jerusalem and their Roman overlords is abridged. The Pseudo-Hegesippian description of Jerusalem's destruction is largely a chronicle of the most grotesque and sensational aspects of the siege and battle described in *Jewish War*.

The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius and the exegetical and epistolary works of Jerome (d. 420) also shaped medieval perceptions of Josephus's works, and served as intermediary sources. In the first three books of his history, Eusebius chronologically arranged and thus integrated Jewish, Roman, and Christian history between the crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem, relying especially on Origen (d. 253/254) in terms of the theological significance of the event. Significant details about the destruction of Jerusalem, some fabricated by Eusebius or his sources, came down to medieval readers through this work. For example, Eusebius quoted Josephus on the coincidence of the Roman assault with the advent of Passover, when Jerusalem was at its most populated. Josephus also claimed that the Second Temple was destroyed on the anniversary of the First Temple's destruction; Eusebius altered this, pointing out instead the fitting coincidence of the destruction with the date of Easter, and Christ's crucifixion. This assertion had a decisive role in shaping medieval Easter rites.

Though he praised the righteousness of Jews who followed the Law, Eusebius saw the end of Jewish autonomy as a necessary precondition for the coming of Christ. Eusebius framed his account as much as a political history as he did a narrative about the fulfillment of prophecy and justice, just as Josephus did. The final siege and its details he took entirely from Josephus, selecting, like Pseudo-Hegesippus, the most gruesome sections.

Eusebius also produced a comparative history in tabular form, his *Chronicle*. In this work, Eusebius laid out in columns general points, largely politically oriented, of the histories of various world empires, including the Hebraic and then Jewish peoples. Here, Josephus was not only a source for the history and fate of Israel, but also for some of the comparative dating, and, it might be said, for the notion of embedding a single people's history into the larger matrix of world history, stressing chronological correspondences and interactions.

Jerome used Josephus copiously, though often, as in his *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, anonymously, and sometimes critically. Medieval scholars followed Jerome in using Josephus as a source for the literal and historical senses of scripture. Jerome asserted that historical material in Josephus's works, such as content related to Greek history, provided crucial background for the elucidation of some biblical books, such as Daniel. His declaration that Josephus was "the second Livy" shows he firmly placed the works of this Jewish author within the continuum of Christian history (*Letters* 22.35).

All three authors drew special attention to the omens of divine origin that heralded the destruction of Jerusalem, which the Jews were unable or unwilling to see. Christian readers tended to ignore Josephus's assertion that zealous Jewish rebels fooled a large portion of the population, who then willfully denied the signs of the imminent Roman victory. Rather, the Christian view was that the Jews as a whole ignored the prodigies. To underscore this, Christian sources compared Jerusalem's Jewish and Christian communities' responses to the many signs that foretold of the coming destruction. The Christian community, understanding the portents, fled to safety, an incident not described by Josephus. This inability or unwillingness to perceive divine prophecy demonstrates the spiritual blindness of the Jews. It prevents them from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah or reaching beyond the carnal meaning of scripture, standard charges against Jews throughout the Middle Ages. In this case, however, the celestial signs point both to the limits of Jewish spirituality and their inability to recognize imminent political disaster.

Jerome's impact on the medieval understanding of Josephus's works may be measured by the configuration of some Josephan manuscripts. In the case of difficult and heavily interpreted authoritative works such as Josephus's histories, the inherited understanding of a text is often visible in manuscripts themselves. Guides for the prospective reader can be found in the structure of both the book and the page, for example, in the designs of chapter headings, initials, and glosses that cluster around the *Testimonium*. In a number of Josephan manuscripts, Jerome's entry for Josephus from his *On Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*) functions as an *accessus*.

Jerome used Josephus's histories to trace connections between Jewish culture in antiquity and the development of specific Christian practices. This is also visible in some of Josephus's manuscripts. In Book 2 of *Jewish War*, Josephus underscored the confluences of Jewish and Greek traditions by describing the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes as different "philosophical sects among the Jews" (*War* 2.117–166; see [Chapter 16](#) by Baumgarten in this volume). Jerome presented Josephus's description of the Essenes as evidence of a pre-Christian paradigm for the institution of cenobitic monasticism. In some medieval manuscripts, this passage is marked by marginal notes or rubricated.

Jerome learned Hebrew to compile a full Latin translation of the Bible, turning to Josephus to elucidate aspects of the text or to solve a narrative problem, such as the quandary of Moses' two wives. For Jerome, Hebrew scholarship and first-hand knowledge of contemporary Jewish intellectual and exegetical traditions did not render Josephus less vital in terms of basic textual or historical matters. This phenomenon recurred frequently in the Middle Ages: a renewed interest in Josephus's histories often coincided with a revitalized concern for literal exegesis, the rise of Christian Hebraism, and the proliferation of manuscripts of patristic and early medieval works that incorporated Josephan material.

24.3 Bede's Use of Josephus

Christian authors might have felt more comfortable citing non-Christian texts second-hand, especially if their intermediary sources had offered interpretations produced by or associated with patristic or quasi-patristic writers. The eighth-century English exegete and historian Bede (d. 735), though he had access to *Jewish Antiquities*, also cited it through intermediary sources. He reported an error in his *Retractions on Acts* (*Liber retractionis in actus apostolorum*) based on a citation from Josephus in Eusebius-Jerome's *Chronicle*. He corrected it after consulting *Jewish Antiquities*. Bede, like many medieval scholars, may have preferred the use of intermediary sources because the Christian re-interpretation of this work could be more salient than the work itself, though it was often cited in such a way so as not to obscure the prestige of the original.

It is all the more important to note, then, that Josephus was relatively absent from the works of Augustine (d. 430), Ambrose, Orosius (d. post 418), and Isidore of Seville. All four refer to him, but infrequently, often anonymously, and almost certainly at second hand. The lack of Josephan material in these works obviously limited his influence on biblical commentary and Christian historical traditions to some degree. Yet, despite this, Josephus maintained a central place as a source for Christian exegesis and history, especially after the eighth century when his authority was much expanded by the use of his works in the commentaries and histories of Bede and scholars associated with the Carolingian Renaissance.

In his exegetical and chronographical works, Bede used Josephus on a much larger scale than had any author since Jerome, and established or re-established patterns for applying Josephan material that would remain influential throughout the later Middle Ages (Schreckenberg 1972, 107–109). Connections between intellectual centers in Italy and Bede's monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow gave Bede access to early Christian works that was unprecedented in northwestern Europe in the early Middle Ages. For Bede,

Josephus's authority rested on special knowledge derived from his priestly lineage, as well as the apparent breadth of his knowledge of both scripture and secular works (*On the Tabernacle* 1.4). He asserted the value of Jewish information for making clear the letter of the biblical text and for shedding light on its chronology. Origen and Jerome and others had consulted Jewish scholars, but, for Bede, in a land where there were no Jews, the contents of *Jewish Antiquities* and, probably, *De excidio*, offered a unique entry into the history of the Hebrews.

Bede used details from Josephus as the literal base from which the spiritual meaning of a text could be developed. The writings of Josephus did not supply straightforward connections to the spiritual sense of scripture, but they could lead to such connections by offering a clarification on which a scholar like Bede might elaborate. Josephus's discussions of ancient Judaism allowed Bede to show the ways in which the history of the Hebrews prefigured not only the events of the New Testament, but the structure and practices of the church itself. Bede followed *Jewish Antiquities* on the temple and tabernacle, but for Bede the ultimate meaning of both were as types for the universal church (*On the Tabernacle* 2.65). While he repeated the assertions of his predecessors regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, Bede's broader interest was also meant to fill out a picture of the city as it existed in the period of the First and Second Temples, rather than exclusively dwelling on the meaning of its destruction.

24.4 Carolingian Reception

Bede's works were carried by the travels of Alcuin (d. 804) and others to centers of learning at the core of the Carolingian Renaissance. The Carolingian court was the epicenter of a reform program that focused on establishing consistency in learning, Latinity, worship, as well as standardizing the text of the Bible. This was to be accomplished by the founding of schools at court and in newly established ecclesiastical institutions, thus creating the conditions for the copying of a wide variety of manuscripts. Contemporary booklists, institutional histories, and extant copies of Josephan manuscripts suggest that they were among the core set of historical and exegetical texts in Carolingian libraries (Schreckenberg 1972, 112; McKitterick 2004, 46–47, 186–217).

Carolingians produced multi-layered biblical commentaries and histories, compilations that reflect the era's concern for preserving patristic and early medieval works. Josephus is well-represented in the writings of Carolingian scholars. The use of Josephan material in the exegesis of Alcuin's own student, Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856) is especially notable because a great deal of his commentary was subsumed into perhaps the most significant exegetical

work of the High Middle Ages, the vast project of communal scholarship known as the *Glossa Ordinaria*. Hrabanus cited Josephus both directly and indirectly, often through the works of Jerome and Bede. Like both, Hrabanus had a special interest in biblical history and the historical sense of the biblical text. Like Bede, he used details provided by Josephus as a point from which to embark on a discussion of the symbolic implications of a particular historical detail.

The world chronicle of the Carolingian historian Freculph of Lisieux (d. 851?) weaves together Josephus, Eusebius-Rufinus, Orosius, and Pseudo-Hegesippus to present a broader view of the destruction. He includes details regarding temple practice, the unrest that consumed Jerusalem after the Crucifixion, the opportunities for the Jews to atone, and the date and theological significance of the destruction itself. Freculph created a narrative more comprehensive than Eusebius's. In the process he reinforced the centrality of the subject of Josephus's work to salvation history and the foundation of Christian hegemony.

In the context of the renewal of literal and historical exegesis, and the attempt to restore the text of the Bible, in part by seeking out the help of Jews, it is not surprising that the works of Josephus should have enjoyed a kind of renaissance. Nevertheless, a seemingly inevitable tension arose when Christian scholars re-established the use of Jewish texts and consulted Jewish scholars on the *Hebraica veritas*. Exegetes interested in the literal sense of scripture were always vulnerable to accusations that they had abandoned the more important spiritual senses of scripture when they used Jewish explanatory material, even if they did so in the service of creating a foundation for the spiritual senses. Amolo of Lyon (d. 852) in his *Book Against the Jews* (*Liber adversos Judaeos*) specifically questioned the use of Josephus and Philo, who, though learned, were burdened with the blindness and perfidy that characterized all Jews (Albert 1996, 129–131).

By the end of the Carolingian Renaissance, Josephus had acquired a variety of characteristics and roles, some of which were in opposition to one another. He was compared to the ancient pagan historian Livy, and preserved a great deal of information about the ancient world, but this information was placed in an entirely Christian context. His works had a quasi-patristic status, yet Josephus remained, had to remain, a Jew. As a Jew, his knowledge was of great value to interpreting Scripture, but also made his works suspect.

24.5 The Age of Manuscripts, the Victorines, and the Comestor

In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, far fewer copies of Josephus

were produced. This reflects a general trend in manuscript production across Europe. Josephus must have remained important for scriptural study, and glimpses can be caught of him here and there. When in the late eleventh century across Europe there was a dramatic increase in the production of manuscripts, *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War* were copied along with the works of the Fathers, ancient and early Christian histories, and organized glosses. The greatest number of Josephus manuscripts, especially richly illustrated manuscripts, were produced between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in northwestern Europe. Clearly Josephus's works were considered to be one component of a comprehensive book collection (for use of Josephan manuscripts in the late twelfth century in Britain, see Vincent 2013.). This new generation of Josephan manuscripts are found in a wide variety of settings. Individual owners of Josephan manuscripts from the mid-twelfth century through the thirteenth century are often associated with the schools, particularly Paris, both as masters and students. By the thirteenth century, many Josephan manuscripts are recognizable as school texts, and this proliferation is certainly related to a renewed interest in the Hebrew Bible, in ancient history, in Christianity's own past, and the general desire to systemize knowledge.

Movements to logically order existing scriptural commentary and build on its tradition began before the twelfth century, by which time new conceptions of the page and its structure were already established. By the twelfth century, the transformation of teaching and scholarship demanded new conceptions for the organization of learning, realized in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, the standard means by which scholars gained access to patristic and early medieval commentary. Josephus figures throughout the *Glossa*. He is cited most often through intermediary sources, both anonymously and attributed, but here, of course, representing received opinion. The theme of divine retribution against the Jews as an explanatory point is not absent, as seen in glosses on Numbers and Lamentations.

The revival of interest in the Hebrew Bible and in literal exegesis is exemplified by the Victorines, canons of the abbey of St. Victor in Paris. The Victorine approach to Scripture, as defined by its most prominent master, Hugh of St. Victor (d.1141), designated comprehending the historical sense of the biblical text as the first step of biblical study. The Victorine School was tremendously influential well into the fourteenth century. This was also a new age of Christian Hebraism and of interreligious scholarly cooperation. The critical role played by Josephan texts in this period is illustrated by the quantity of Josephan material in the commentaries and histories of two teachers and scholars, Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175) and Peter Comestor (d. 1178). Andrew's commentaries embody the historicist ideology of St. Victor in its most essential form. They are focused almost entirely on the literal, and make liberal use of Jewish sources. Attributions are cloudy, but there is no

doubting that Andrew accepts as quasi-biblical the words of Josephus. He also placed passages from Josephus within the florilegia that circulated with some of his works (see van Liere 1996, lxxvii–lxxxix, xc–xciii).

Access to Josephan material did not come to most medieval students through the manuscripts of Josephan works themselves, though many have marginal glosses and were clearly put to use, but rather through Peter Comestor's *Scholastic History* (*Historia Scholastica*). The Comestor used scriptural text, Jewish material, patristic works, and later biblical commentary to create a kind of biblical storybook that was shaped to deal with the exigencies of the classroom. The Comestor's debt to Josephus is profound, as the *Scholastic History* contains over seventy-two citations to *Jewish Antiquities* in the Genesis section alone (Feldman 1993, 98–101).

The *Scholastic History* was widely read, both by professional scholars and in vernacular translations by the laity, who gained knowledge of the biblical text from it. Commentaries were written on it. It became a standard university textbook, and was, by the thirteenth century, required reading in the first year of theology curricula. For generations of students, it served as an introduction to theological studies, and to the ways in which the understanding of sacred history might be complemented by the works of a learned Jew, Josephus. The multiple translations of the *Scholastic History* or vernacular texts that used it as a source, including the universal histories so characteristic of the twelfth century, also communicated this view of Josephus to lay readers.

24.6 The New Clerical Education, Hebrew Texts, and Josephan Texts

The widespread acceptance of the *Scholastic History* transmitted the essentials of Victorine exegetical ideology to the burgeoning academic world outside the cloister. However, the concerns and objectives of schoolmen who lived in the world were of necessity different from those living within the cloister. From the mid-twelfth and into the thirteenth century a host of issues complicated biblical study. Clerical education itself changed. The literal sense of scripture might remain essential to study, but moralization and allegorization were more useful to those who were being trained to preach and teach. Theology and dialectics took on a life and prestige of their own. New apparatuses, glosses on glosses, concordances, *distinctiones*, and *exempla* were developed for the classroom and to prepare students for pastoral duties. For exegetical purposes, relatively contemporary Jewish and midrashic material was available in the works of some Christian authors, as were the words of Josephus. Christian Hebraism and cooperation between Jewish and Christian scholars dwindled, especially with the movement of Jews across

Western Europe following a series of expulsions. There was a decline in the production of Josephan manuscripts in the mid-thirteenth century.

The new orders of friars resurrected many of the ideas the Victorines had put forward regarding scriptural study, though the mendicant orders did not entirely eschew speculative philosophy or cease to develop aids for study and preparation for teaching and preaching. However, some friars rejected aspects of the structure of contemporary theological education, arguing that the Bible had ceased to be the central focus and was too often eclipsed by other works, such as Peter Lombard's *Sentences* or the *Glossa*. We see these charges leveled against contemporary theological education in the works of the Franciscan Roger Bacon (d. 1292). He asserted that the aim of all education, arts, sciences, and philosophy should be the apprehension of Christian truth. Bacon referred to Josephan apologetics to defend the study of the arts, sciences, and philosophy by Christians on historical grounds, but stipulated that they should be understood to have an ancillary status to the true understanding of scripture and creation, to the study of an exclusively Christian theology. He proposed the re-examination of texts central to high medieval culture, beginning with the acquisition of linguistic skills that would allow scholars to read these texts in their original languages. These ideas were current at a time when medieval state-making was well underway and the Jews were under increasing political stress in the West.

Academic, political, and ecclesiastical forces joined to deal with the growth of heresy and a perceived need to combat non-conformity, as well as the problem of Jewish status in Western Christendom. Mendicants received the right or license to preach against heresy, but in the thirteenth century, some Dominicans and Franciscans turned their attention to contemporary Jewish practice, to preaching to Jews, and to organizing disputations with Jewish authorities. Behind the mendicants' promotion of Christian Hebraism and the re-examination of Jewish practice and belief, lay the conviction that rabbinic textual traditions at the heart of contemporary Judaism had made Jews stray from the purposes they were supposed to serve in Christendom: to be witnesses to Christian truth; to preserve the *Hebraica veritas* so that it could be transmitted to Christians; and to fulfill the conditions for the Second Coming of Christ through conversion. Confronting Jews with the errors and distortions of their own scriptures and the profane nature of Jewish attachment to the Talmud would require a specific set of skills including the ability to employ logic and reason. Linguistic training in Hebrew and Aramaic would allow a fuller knowledge of Jewish texts, especially Talmudic texts, which stood in the way of persuading Jews of the truths of their own scriptures. In thirteenth-century France, the Talmud was put on trial and thousands of copies were burnt as if they were heretical. The Dominican scholar Raymond Martini (d. 1285) considered authentic Judaism to be embodied in the works of Josephus, which for him represented a pure, pre-Talmudic, pre-rabbinic

Judaism, the textual focus of which appeared to be the Hebrew Bible (Cohen 1982, 148).

In this atmosphere the most widely read book of commentary outside of the *Glossa* was Nicholas of Lyra's (d. 1349) fourteenth-century Latin biblical commentary (*Postilla litteralis super totam bibliam*). The author deployed the skills of a master of disputation. Nicholas had an enduring interest in literal and historical exegesis, complemented by a facility for languages and wide reading in Christian and Jewish texts. He used Jewish material itself to challenge Jewish practice, belief, and understanding of scripture. He offered variant readings derived from the Septuagint, ancient and medieval Jewish commentary, the Aramaic targums, and Josephus to show that some Jewish material supported the Christian interpretation of biblical passages, particularly those that were understood as referring to the coming of Christ. He also used Josephan works in more traditional ways, to supplement biblical texts, or to identify passages in the Hebrew Bible that prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem (Klepper 2007, 42–45, 53). An interest in literal exegesis had often been tied to anxiety regarding the state of the biblical text itself. Or the literal meaning of a text could be multi-layered, as in the case where the literal meaning of a phrase must also be construed as prophetic. Nicholas used the works of Josephus not only to assist with "literal" readings, but to promote the use of literal exegesis and Jewish sources in the service of combating blasphemy.

24.7 Popular Reception and Crusader Use of Josephan Texts

Josephan subjects also had a place in Christian tradition outside the cloister or schoolroom. Popular apocryphal material that became enmeshed with the basic account of the fall of Jerusalem would come to influence the Josephan texts themselves. The development can be traced through the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, versions of the acts of Pilate, the legends of the life of Veronica, including the *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii* (*The Cure of Tiberius*), to the *Vindicta Salvatoris* "Vengeance of Our Lord." Beginning in the twelfth century, but reaching its apex in the fifteenth, vernacular romances, poems, and dramas, with their roots in the *Vindicta Salvatoris* tradition appeared. All were infused with the vengeance themes found especially in Pseudo-Hegesippus, but identified entirely with Josephus. Their creation was related to the phenomenon of lay patronage.

The *Vindicta Salvatoris* tradition was prolific. Details from it were imported into a great variety of texts. It is one of the major sources of the notorious fourteenth-century English poem in the alliterative tradition, the *Siege of*

Jerusalem, and the foundation for a group of dramas referred to as the “Vengeance of Our Lord” plays. The works derived from this tradition augment existing ideas about the destruction of Jerusalem as an act of revenge by narrowing the historical context and altering the motives for Roman actions against their rebellious client state. In these stories, the conversion or semi-conversion of a Roman imperial figure inspires a military campaign against the killers of Christ. Miracles replace imperial politics when an unpleasant illness strikes the emperor or general, who then learns that Jews have murdered Christ, his one hope of a return to health. Belief in the stories he is told of Jesus’ healing miracles, or a miraculous healing in and of itself, leads to a return to health and the vow to avenge his new Lord (Millar 2000, 42–75).

The figure of Josephus is inserted into a number of the texts derivative of the *Vindicta* tradition. For example, in the tenth-century *Historia miscella* of Landolfus Sagax (d.?), it is Josephus himself who heals the emperor Vespasian’s son, Titus. Here Josephus is both physician and magician, two roles and stereotypes associated with Jews in the Middle Ages. This version of the story was used in the thirteenth-century German law book, the *Sachsenspiegel*, to rationalize imperial law relating to Jews. Jews are protected under the King’s peace because of Vespasian’s gratitude to Josephus. The thirteenth-century *Schwabenspiegel* explains the status of Jews in relation to the Roman/German Emperor or King: Jews are not only protected, but are the slaves of the King because the Jews whom Josephus kept alive after the siege were sold to Titus and thus rights over them were inherited by German Emperors (or kings, depending on the status of their anointment) (Lewy 1937/38, 221–242). Clearly, this story is meant to show continuity between Roman and German imperial authority, but it places Josephus as well as the destruction in a new light. Josephus explicitly becomes a figure of such eminence that he can negotiate the position of the Jews with an emperor. Though he remains a Jew, he is separated from his people by his own clear partiality for Roman culture, and by his peculiar status as a kind of honorary Christian authority. Ultimately, Josephus is the author whose narrative can solve issues of legal precedence: Jerusalem’s destruction determines the legal status of the Jews.

The “Vengeance of Our Lord” plays are perhaps the most significant offspring of this tradition. They were staged in cities across Europe, and consequently were experienced by a much wider audience, the illiterate as well as the literate. The elaborate sets and massive scale of the productions would have involved large portions of a community. In these settings, the story of the destruction of Jerusalem and the theme of vengeance wreaked on the Jews for Christ’s crucifixion are still prominent, but the details and the milieu are modified to celebrate chivalric values and courtly splendor. In Eustache Marcadé’s colossal *La Vengeance Jhesu Crist*, Josephus again appears as a

character, but here as a warrior as well as a would-be diplomat. Though he fought against the Roman side, he is saved from death by his bravery and loyalty in battle, and because he attempted to negotiate a peace (Wright 1989, 154–156).

The recurring ideas regarding portents and Jewish refusal or inability to acknowledge them are often highlighted in these works. The destruction offers an opportunity to show a wider audience the tenacity of Jewish disbelief and the stubbornness that keeps them blind to God's own signs delivered before them. The signs and the rejection of them make it possible to show the inherent dishonesty of Jews. Here it is not the *Testimonium* that confirms Josephus's difference from other Jews, but rather his skills as a leader of men and the foresight that is the inversion of Jewish blindness.

The traditional role of Josephus as an exegetical source whose works were drawn on for geographical detail and the popular works in the Vengeance traditions seem to merge in Crusade accounts. In the latter there was a ready pool of legends related to Titus and Vespasian and other Josephan themes from which to draw, to read typologically, and to be included in the Crusaders' ideological repertoire. In the context of the Crusades, this Christian reinterpretation of the events of 70 C.E. meshed well with and may have been a source for ideas about salvation and penitence in Christ's service that were advanced at Clermont and developed further in crusading sermons and histories. In the figures of the Christianized Roman emperors, there were established important and powerful models for a militant and militarized Christianity, models that may have aided the interpolation of a generalized idea of vengeance into that ideology. Connections between Crusaders and Roman emperors are explicitly drawn in the Crusade encyclical attributed to the early eleventh-century Pope Sergius V, but almost certainly a forgery produced by the Cluniac monks of Moissac. The text of the encyclical associates the absolution offered to Christians for freeing Jerusalem from the Muslims and the absolution granted to the pagan emperors Titus and Vespasian for their role in avenging the death of Christ. Correspondences between the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Crusading can be seen in a number of Crusading texts, such as of Baldric of Dol's *Historia Hierosolymitana*, Albert of Aachen's *Historia Ierosolimitana*, the *Chanson d'Antioche*, among others (Throop 2011, 205–206). Josephan material was used in Crusader accounts in other ways. William of Tyre paraphrased *Jewish War* and the Book of Revelation in his description of the massacres in the Holy Land by Christian Crusaders in order to justify the violence used against the inhabitants. In Fulcher of Chartres's *History of the Expedition to Jerusalem*, the author refers his readers to the works of Josephus on a variety of topographical subjects, for example, the dimensions of various landmarks, the location of Tiberias, and the sources of the Jordan. In some instances, he compares a detail from the scriptural text to that of Josephus's histories in

much the same way Jerome might in a commentary, indicating points of agreement and disagreement between the two. In the third book of the *Expedition*, Fulcher uses fairly long quotations from *Jewish War* about Titus's travels in the Holy Land that function to virtually comment on the course of Baldwin's travels. These typological links might have functioned not only to identify the Crusaders and the Romans who crushed the rebellion of the first century, but to mutually justify the actions of the former by the correspondence with the latter.

24.8 Conclusion

The influence and role of Josephus in Christian tradition are so vast and primordial and intersect with so many strands of interpretation and historical *topoi* that they remain difficult to characterize. Clearly, some aspects of intellectual and popular culture in Western Christendom were created by the tension between the necessities of conspicuously assimilating aspects of Jewish history while ostentatiously rejecting aspects of Jewish tradition. This tension was a powerful force that created great and paradoxical inconsistencies in the construction of medieval Christians' identities in relation to their own history. The Christian tradition of Josephus uniquely illustrates this aspect of medieval culture. Josephan material was pervasive in Christian exegetical and historical tradition, in a variety of contexts that crossed generic lines. Josephus offered a link to Christianity's Jewish and Roman past, for example, in certain readings of the Hebrew Bible, or in *Jewish War*'s convincing narrative for the displacement of the Jews by the Christians as God's chosen in its dramatic account of the Roman destruction of Jewish Jerusalem. The past that was encountered by Christians using Josephus's works was unencumbered by associations with the Jewish present or with the ancient world's pagan sensibilities. Yet, in a way, Josephus represented all of these traditions—the pagan, the Jewish, and the Christian—for medieval readers. For Christians, these representations allowed many ways of resolving problems within their own tradition and enabled them to use this Jewish author's works to discredit and denigrate his own people. The works of Josephus were also seen as geopolitically involved historical and apologetic works that could be drawn on for many different purposes. Christian authors interested in history recognized that the works of Josephus were capable of linking and aiding in the interpretation of events across historical, geographical, and cultural divides. These links were fostered by the way in which Josephus himself presented his own and his people's history.

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FURTHER READING

Real obstacles face any scholar interested in the medieval use and authority of Josephus's works. First and foremost, there is no modern edition of the entire Latin Josephus (see [Chapter 21](#) by Levenson and Martin and [Chapter 20](#) by Leoni in this volume). In 1958, Franz Blatt produced a critical edition of the first five books of *Jewish Antiquities*. It contains a somewhat problematic yet more or less comprehensive list of extant manuscripts. All studies of the Josephan manuscript tradition must begin with Blatt.

In the 1970s, Heinz Schreckenberg published *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, and a supplement, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und Textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus*. A non-German reader can easily understand the register of references to Josephan works by Greek and Latin authors through the Middle Ages, though the list is incomplete. These are the most useful tools for initiating any broad or localized study of Josephan influence in the Middle Ages produced to date. Beryl Smalley's (1978) *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* is indispensable for the broader context of Christian exegetical tradition.

Only a handful of studies treat specific cases of Josephan influence on medieval texts. Mark Balfour's (1995) "Moses and the Princess," in *Medium Aevum* 64, provides a good example of a study that considers a medieval use of Josephan material colored by patristic authority.

Art history has produced more studies related to Josephus in the Middle Ages than any other discipline. The most important of these, to date, is Ulrike Liebl's (1997) *Die illustrierten Flavius-Josephus-Handschriften des Hochmittelalters*, which surveys and itemizes the motifs in illuminated manuscripts. This book lays the groundwork for more analytical studies within and outside of art history, especially on the relationship between Josephus and the biblical text. There are also numerous article-length studies of particular manuscripts. Walter Cahn's 1966 article is an excellent model.

Unfortunately, existing critical bibliographies offer little on the medieval *nachleben* of Josephus. Some bibliography can be found in my (2005) dissertation, "The Uses of Josephus: Jewish History in Medieval Christian Tradition," though it deals mainly with the reception of Josephus in medieval England.

CHAPTER 25

Sefer Yosippon (Josippon)

Saskia Dönitz

25.1 Introduction: Josephus in Jewish Tradition Post-70 C.E.

In his works, the historian Flavius Josephus offers a thorough description of Jewish history in Greek from the creation until his own lifetime. Of his overall thirty-book *œuvre*, seven books (*Jewish War*) are devoted to one of the central events of Jewish history: the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Josephus's writings were not transmitted in Hebrew literature until the tenth century C.E. Nevertheless, the Rabbis were familiar with his works. Several of Josephus's stories appear as parallels in the rabbinic corpus but his name is never mentioned (see [Chapter 19](#) by Kalmin in this volume). Josephus shared this fate with other writings from the time of the Second Temple, for example, the Books of Maccabees.

During the centuries following the destruction of the Second Temple, the Rabbis barely mentioned this event. Neither the Mishnah nor the Tosefta deal extensively with the destruction except for enumerating it among other catastrophes that have befallen the Jewish people. The first generations after 70 C.E., however, expected the rebuilding of the temple. When the Rabbis realized that this would not happen in the near future, they busied themselves with the reorganization and reorientation of Judaism according to existing halakhic traditions (see [Chapter 18](#) by Nakman in this volume). For this reason, they tried to downplay the importance and the meaning of the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. by applying to it already existing explanations for the loss of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. (Goldenberg 2006).

This silence of the Rabbis could also be explained by a certain intention: they wished to create a new temple in the mind and imagination of the people by emphasizing prayer and study of the Torah as substitutes for the rites performed in the lost cultic center. Not only did they seek to focus attention away from the temple, but also from writing history in the sense of classical historiography, and thus from the works of Flavius Josephus, in order to prevent another religious-political upheaval (Stemberger 1992; Gafni 2007). They did not succeed since in the years 132–135 C.E. the Jews again rebelled against Rome under the leadership of Bar Kochba.

Apart from these internal Jewish reasons, it may well be the case that the Rabbis' aversion to historiography has its roots in their reaction to the rise of Christianity. Pauline theology claimed the role of the chosen people for the newly established religion. According to Christian reasoning, God chose the Christians to be the new Israel in place of the Jews who did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and were responsible for his murder (Simon 1948). Consequently God punished and abandoned them. The destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. served the Christians as historical proof for this view. Origen and Eusebius drew especially on Josephus's description of the destruction of the Second Temple in order to legitimize these Christian claims. As such, Eusebius excerpted long passages from *Jewish War* to underscore Christian arguments about the rejection of the Jews (Hata 2007; see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki in this volume). Moreover, in *Jewish Antiquities*, Christian readers could find information about the life of Jesus and his time. Whatever the original form of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, most scholars agree that Josephus mentioned Jesus in one way or another (Baras 1987; see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). Thus, Josephus was exploited by Christian theologians as representing a reliable witness for Christ and in their being the true chosen people. These Christian interpretations and their use of Josephus's works may further account for the silence of the Rabbis. Perhaps the similarity between Josephus's arguments for the destruction of the temple and Christian argumentation caused the Rabbis to ignore his work (see [Chapter 19](#) by Kalmin in this volume). They certainly did not wish to come too close to Christian theology.

The historical change that Christianity underwent once it was adopted by Emperor Constantine the Great made it increasingly difficult for the Rabbis to refrain from commenting on the destruction of the temple. As a consequence, we do find discussions of the destruction of the Second Temple in the subsequent literature, i.e., the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Ekhah Rabbah. These texts apply the Deuteronomistic scheme of sin and punishment as a means of explanation. Yet, against the Christian argument that God had rejected Israel, the texts emphasize that the Jews are still God's chosen people and that the temple will be rebuilt at the "end of days." While Josephus focuses on the Jewish War and the reasons for the destruction of the temple, the rabbis tried to create a new Jewish identity without a temple and a nation, but with a focus on living in hope of the messianic age. This kind of theological-historical framework was also one of the reasons why the Rabbis did not write history: they already found it laid down in the Holy Scriptures (Gafni 2007).

25.2 Sources

After a thousand years of relative silence, suddenly Josephus's works appear in the form of a Hebrew paraphrase called *Sefer Yosippon*, written in Southern Italy (Flusser 1980/81). Probably in the area of Naples, a Jewish author undertook a most astonishing work: he wrote a history of the Jewish people beginning at the time of Daniel and Esther and until the destruction of the Second Temple. Even more astonishing are the sources that he used: the Vulgate (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapters 3–9; numbers according to the edition by Flusser), the Latin translation of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapters 10–50), and the Latin paraphrase of Josephus's *Jewish War* called *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem/De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae* (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapters 51–89; on *De excidio*, see [Chapter 24](#) by Kletter in this volume). Moreover, he also used parts of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Books 1–2), Livy (*Ab Urbe Condita* 2), and Orosius's *History Against the Pagans* (*Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri* 8).

Sefer Yosippon, also known under the title *Sefer Joseph ben Gorion* (falsely attributed to one of the commanders of the Jewish War; see *War* 2.563 // *De excidio* 3.3.27), became the most influential Hebrew historical work of the Middle Ages. *Sefer Yosippon* or *Sefer Joseph ben Gorion* was read by Jews throughout the Mediterranean world, in Palestine, in Ashkenaz communities, in Byzantium, and in Sefarad. After a millennium of ignorance, the Jews received Josephus back into their midst (see Dönitz 2013).

Scholarship on *Sefer Yosippon* is still puzzled by this sudden emergence and overwhelming success of this work. Several explanations can be offered:

1. *Sefer Yosippon* was thought to be the Hebrew original of Josephus's *Jewish War*.
2. *Sefer Yosippon* was the only source for post-biblical Jewish history in Hebrew.
3. *Sefer Yosippon*'s description of the destruction of the temple offers an explanation for the ongoing Jewish exile.

This third reason is connected to one of *Sefer Yosippon*'s main sources: *On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem (De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae)*, written at the end of the fourth century (Ussani 1932; Ussani and Mras 1960; Bell 1977, 1987). The author of this recasting of Josephus's *Jewish War*, known to us as Pseudo-Hegesippus, makes three important changes in the text. First, he introduces several Christian sections into his narrative, especially those that also treated issues in the Jewish-Christian debate. They repeatedly emphasize that the destruction of the temple was a punishment for the Jews for their disbelief in, and killing of, the man who was believed to be Christ. For these parts the author resorts to Josephus's work much as Origen and Eusebius had done. He even includes a version of the *Testimonium Flavianum* (*De excidio* 2.12; on the *Testimonium Flavianum*; see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume).

Second, the author of *De excidio* developed out of Josephus's lament for Jerusalem in *Jewish War* 5.19 a long text relating to the fate of the Holy City (*De excidio* 5.2). Again, the focus is the interpretation of the destruction as God's punishment. The Jews are presented as a divided nation that shed the blood of their people and killed their prophets; consequently God has deserted them. Pseudo-Hegesippus emphasizes that the temple will never be rebuilt (*De excidio* 5.2.1–2); perhaps this represents a response to Emperor Julian's failed attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple in the early 360s.

Third, the author focuses his description of the Jewish War on the event that served him most in his presentation of the Christian argument: the destruction of Jerusalem. He condenses Books 5–7 of *Jewish War* into one single book with the destruction at its center. Large parts of Books 6 and 7 are missing. The story of the suicide on the fortress of Masada is simply appended at the end without further explanation (*De excidio* 5.52–53).

The scholarly question is whether *De excidio* served as the basis for the Hebrew retelling of the war in *Sefer Yosippon*. There is no definite evidence that the tenth-century author of *Sefer Yosippon* knew the other, more literal Latin translation of *Jewish War* by Rufinus or even the Greek original. Parts of *Jewish War* that do not appear in *De excidio* are also missing from *Sefer Yosippon*. In Chapters 30–35, the author added information to *Jewish Antiquities* that derives from *Jewish War* via *De excidio*. No element in the text of *Sefer Yosippon* proves that the author knew the original *Jewish War*. On the contrary, the literary structure of *De excidio* is reflected in *Sefer Yosippon*. For example, *Sefer Yosippon* follows *De excidio* (Book 2.4–5) in Chapter 57, where excerpts from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (18.65–80 and 18.116–120) are inserted into the narrative. As in his source (*De excidio* 3.16–18), we also find in the *Sefer Yosippon* (Chapters 67–68) that the description of the events at Jotapata lacks the section where Josephus declares himself to be a prophet. Finally, *Sefer Yosippon* shares the composition of its final chapters with *De excidio*, meaning that most of the history of the Jewish side at Masada is omitted (see above). All these parallels between *De excidio* and *Sefer Yosippon* demonstrate that the author of the latter used the anti-Jewish Latin paraphrase of Flavius Josephus's *Jewish War*.

The Christian orientation of *De excidio* certainly posed a problem for the author of *Sefer Yosippon* and therefore he reworked his source. Wherever *De excidio* includes a Christian text, especially those containing anti-Jewish phrases, *Sefer Yosippon* either omits the passage or rephrases it. The passages containing accusations concerning the murder of Jesus Christ are omitted or changed in a way that they emphasize *Sefer Yosippon*'s own interpretation of the destruction of the temple, focusing on the sin of spilling pure (i.e., priestly; see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume) blood in the temple precinct. There are two clear examples of this. First, where Josephus's testimony for the existence of Jesus is inserted in *De excidio* (2.12), the whole

chapter—including the *Testimonium Flavianum* and references to John the Baptist—is simply omitted by the author of *Sefer Yosippon* (Chapter 62). Secondly, *Sefer Yosippon* recasts the elaborate lament for Jerusalem (*De excidio* 5.2; *Sefer Yosippon*, Chapter 73). In this passage, the author of *De excidio* lingers on the terrible acts committed in Jerusalem while the author of *Sefer Yosippon* cuts the detailed descriptions of cruelty and omits the explanation that Jerusalem was destroyed because the Jews rejected and killed Jesus. Instead, *Sefer Yosippon* focuses on the defilement of the divine covenant by the rebels. Where *De excidio* emphasizes Roman desire for peace over the blindness of the Jews, *Sefer Yosippon* stresses the rebels' evil deeds, which follows more closely Josephus's original argument in *Jewish War*.

In general, the sections of *De excidio* that contain Christian accusations about the murder of Jesus are rewritten in the *Sefer Yosippon* so as to concentrate on the author's view of the destruction, in which he draws on biblical ideas about the collective sin of fraternal strife and the spilling of innocent blood for which the First Temple was destroyed (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapter 78, ll. 25ff. and 186ff.; Deut. 19:10; 2 Kings 21:16; 24:4).

25.3 Provenance

Aside from this biblical interpretative framework, there are some hints as to the location and time in which the author of *Sefer Yosippon* wrote his work. Following Josephus's text, the *Sefer Yosippon* refrains from mentioning the rebuilding of the temple in the near future as well as at the end of time, but does elaborate on the inheritance of the world to come for those who are willing to suffer martyrdom (Dönitz 2013). In the description of the mother and her seven sons killed by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C.E. (cf. 2 Maccabees 7), there is reference to a light awaiting them in the afterlife (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapter 15, ll. 21, 77). This light is also encountered in another context: when soldiers fighting for God die in battle, they will be rewarded with a place at the Great Light (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapter 65, ll. 26f.; Chapter 67, ll. 28, 35; Chapter 79, ll. 41–44). Likewise, the story of the fall of Masada is altered by the author of *Sefer Yosippon* in a remarkable way: instead of the suicide as described by Josephus (and *De excidio*) in *Sefer Yosippon* only women and children are killed and the men fight against the Romans, expecting to die in the battle for God (Chapter 89). This is probably a hint at an ongoing internal Jewish debate about acceptable forms of martyrdom. The author of *Sefer Yosippon* offers a compromise between the rabbinic ideal of passive martyrdom and those factions who favor active martyrdom (Grossman 1999). The author of *Sefer Yosippon* may have experienced Muslim soldiers fighting a “jihad” during the Saracen invasions of Southern Italy in the tenth century C.E., when the expectation of heavenly reward for fighting in God's

name was even part of the ideology of the Christian Holy War. While we can speculate on the context in which *Sefer Yosippon* was written, we cannot be certain.

To sum up, *Sefer Yosippon* represents a unique Jewish literary work possibly written in a complex environment where Jews, Christians, and Muslims met. Moreover, it belongs in a region and time in which Greek and Latin (and may be Arabic) existed side by side. Flusser (1981) suggested locating the author in Naples, since the library of the Duke of Naples preserved manuscripts of the Latin *Jewish Antiquities*, *De excidio* and other works. Manuscripts from ninth-century Italy, containing the Latin *Jewish Antiquities* and the *De excidio*, are still extant and could have served as a *Vorlage* for the author of *Sefer Yosippon* (Flusser 1987, 392f.). Yet his true whereabouts remain an enigma.

25.4 Reception

With Josephus's reappearance in Hebrew literature, his work in the form of *Sefer Yosippon* became an important source for Jewish authors. The history of the reception of this text shows that it was a major source for interpretations of the Bible used in Jewish-Christian disputes. Just as Josephus was quoted by Christians, *Sefer Yosippon* was relied upon by Jews, and often within the same debate, for subjects such as the destruction of the temple, the interpretation of the exile, or the genealogy of the four empires from the Book of Daniel. Also texts that actually do not belong to the Josephan tradition, but rather to the Vulgate, namely the Books of the Maccabees or the additions to the Book of Esther, which were included in *Sefer Yosippon*, were topics of interest for medieval Jewish literary society (Dönitz 2009, 2013). A version of *Sefer Yosippon* was integrated into *Sefer ha-Zikhronot le-Yerahmeel* by Eleazar ben Asher ha-Levi in the fourteenth century in Ashkenaz. This huge compilation organizes the lesser-known Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Middle Ages, among them some belonging to Second Temple literature, chronologically. In this way Josephus's Hebrew paraphrase became part of the Jewish historical outlook beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the messianic future (Yassif 2001).

The *Sefer Yosippon* was translated into several languages, beginning with Arabic in the tenth or eleventh century and Ethiopic in the thirteenth century. With the rise of Humanism, Jewish authors began to read the original Josephus again. This, however, did not minimize the influence of *Sefer Yosippon*. Michael Adam published a Yiddish translation in 1546 and Abraham Asa's translation of the text into Ladino was published in 1753. Remarkably, Christians also became interested in *Sefer Yosippon*, which resulted in several Christian editions with Latin translations (Sebastian

Münster, Basel, 1541; Friedrich Breithaupt, Gotha, 1707 and 1710). An English translation was published in 1558 by Peter Morwen, while it appeared in a French translation in 1706. In fact, in Jewish orthodox circles *Sefer Yosippon* is read as the original Hebrew Josephus to this very day (Bowman 1995b).

25.5 Epilogue: The History of Scholarship on the *Sefer Yosippon*

Scholarly analysis of *Sefer Yosippon* began in the sixteenth century with Azariah de Rossi, who rectified the notion that the book was written by Flavius Josephus himself. Azariah proved that it was a medieval compilation. Leopold Zunz dated the work to the middle of the tenth century (Zunz 1892, 154ff.). Since the book had been revised and copied numerous times, the edition of a relatively early stage of the text was crucial for research on its textual development.

In 1980/81 David Flusser published such an edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, together with a second volume that extensively discussed the date and region in which the book was written, as well as its literary development and its contexts. Flusser located the book in Southern Italy, in the region of Naples (see above). For the date of the book, he tried to validate a colophon he found in one of his manuscripts, dating the production of the text to the year 953 (Flusser 1980/81, 79–84). But earlier quotations from *Sefer Yosippon* (e.g., by Saadia Gaon, d. 942), as well as the formulation of the colophon, mark 953 as the year in which the book was copied rather than the year of its composition (Bonfil 1981; Bowman 1995a). Since the first chapter records the dwelling of the Hungarians at the Danube, at least this part of the text could not have been written before 895, but certainly before 953.

The text used by Flusser does not represent the earliest stage of the text known to us. Several fragments of *Sefer Yosippon* that were found in the Cairo Geniza reflect a different text than the one edited by Flusser (Dönitz 2013). These fragments still await scholarly analysis and a critical edition.

The question of the development of *Sefer Yosippon* was also posed by Shulamit Sela in the posthumous publication of her work on the Arabic translation of the book (Sela 2009). According to Sela, there were several stages in the development of the Hebrew text that are also reflected in the Judeo-Arabic translation of *Sefer Yosippon*. The earliest stage contained only the chapters on the Maccabees (reflected in the Arabic Book of the Maccabees). Nevertheless, Sela's ideas are problematic because she uses

mostly literary arguments and there is no manuscript evidence to support her hypothesis (Dönitz 2013).

According to Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon* was redacted at least three times. The first recension (A, edited by Flusser) was possibly composed in the tenth century in Southern Italy. Very soon it was reworked in Ashkenaz, perhaps by Gershom ben Yehudah. Meor ha-Golah. Rashi quotes this ashkenazic recension in his commentary on Daniel 5:1 and 6:29. Later, a text representing a counter-story to the *Testimonium Flavianum* was inserted into this recension (Dönitz 2013). The second recension (B, printed in Mantua 1480) was made in the twelfth century. Its most important innovation was the inclusion of parts of the Hebrew Alexander romance as well as chapters taken from the Septuagint additions to the biblical Book of Daniel (van Bekkum 1992, 1994; Dönitz 2009, 2011a). The third recension (C, edited by Hominer 1967) was created by the Byzantine scholar Yehuda Mosconi. He also introduced new texts into the book, but his most important contribution was an extensive rewording of the existing text, enlarging it by about a third compared to its earlier versions (Dönitz 2011b).

Thanks to Flusser's work, it is evident that *Sefer Yosippon* was rewritten at least twice. The first epitome is attributed to Samuel Ibn Nagrela, but this version is now lost. The second epitome is preserved in the *Book of the Memory of the Kings of the Second Temple* by Abraham Ibn Daud (Vehlow 2013).

Sefer Yosippon represents one of the few examples of medieval Hebrew historiography, although according to some scholars no such genre existed (Yerushalmi 1982). Moreover, it constituted an example of Jewish literary activity in Southern Italy, together with Piyyut, Megillat Ahimaaz, and the writings of Jesaja of Trani, as rare literature from the Jews in Byzantium (Bonfil 2009; de Lange 2003–2005). *Sefer Yosippon* was seen as confirming the argument that the Babylonian Talmud was not made canonical by the Jews in Italy in the tenth century, because no part of the text shows any acquaintance with it (Bonfil 1987, 29f.). Finally, despite its special ideas about suicide, *Sefer Yosippon* is always listed as a source for the extreme ideal of martyrdom which fully developed later in the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles (Grossman 1999; Haverkamp 2005; Dönitz 2013).

This review of the research history of *Sefer Yosippon* shows that there is still much to be done in order to fully understand the history and the role of this text and, as a consequence, the importance of Josephus for the Jews in the Middle Ages.

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CHAPTER 26

The Slavonic Version of Josephus's *Jewish War*

Kate Leeming

26.1 Introduction

The Slavonic version of Josephus's *Jewish War* is one of the most fascinating of all medieval translations. Unlike the vast majority of medieval Slavonic translations which clearly derive from the corresponding Greek texts, the Slavonic Josephus diverges from the surviving Greek version of *Jewish War* to such an extent that it is in places impossible to escape the conclusion that it was translated from a manuscript substantially different from any of those which have survived in Greek. This of itself would be unremarkable if the differences between the Slavonic and Greek versions could with confidence be ascribed to some Byzantine Greek or medieval Slavonic scribe or editor. But in his prologue to the Greek version, Josephus says that he himself was the author of two versions of *Jewish War*, one, written in his native tongue for a Jewish readership, the second, in Greek for a readership of Greeks and Romans. Of these two texts, only the second has survived in its entirety in Greek. Could the Slavonic Josephus, with its “additions” (some concerning the ministry of John the Baptist and a “wonderworker”), “omissions” from the extant Greek text, and different editorial perspective to the surviving Greek, preserved only in late medieval Christian manuscripts, be an accurate representation of the first version of *Jewish War*, written by Josephus himself, and now lost in Greek?

This possibility has ensured that the Slavonic Josephus has been the subject of heated debate among Slavists, New Testament, and Josephan scholars ever since the publication in the West of a German translation of the first four books (Berendts and Grass 1924–1927). The German translator, Alexander Berendts, was of the opinion that the Slavonic version of *Jewish War* was not based on the extant Greek version, edited by Benedikt Niese (1894). He postulated that the Slavonic version was translated from a manuscript which was substantially different from any of those that have come down to us in Greek. The manuscript from which the translator worked subsequently perished, according to this theory. Berendts further made the startling claim that the Slavonic Josephus was translated not from a Greek text, but from Josephus's first version of *Jewish War*, written in his native tongue (Aramaic

or possibly Hebrew) for the Jews “of the interior,” of which Josephus himself speaks in the prologue to the Greek version. Josephus here states that his Greek text is a translation of his own original text which he distributed widely throughout Parthia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia in a campaign to acquaint his fellow Jews with the facts of the war in which he participated (*War* 1.3, 6). Berendts’s theory was immediately espoused by Robert Eisler, who followed Berendts in diligently searching out suspected Aramaicisms in the Slavonic Josephus. Eisler went so far as to claim that the lost Aramaic original could be accurately reconstructed by translating back word-for-word from the Slavonic (Eisler and Gaster 1929–1930).

Needless to say, if the Slavonic Josephus could be proved beyond doubt to be a faithful and accurate translation of Josephus’s first version of *Jewish War*, it would assume a central place not only in Josephan studies but also in the study of the early church. But the Berendts/Eisler theory has not gone unchallenged. The German scholars’ optimistic search for Aramaicisms or traces of Aramaic text in the Slavonic version were comprehensively challenged first by Solomon Zeitlin (1929) and then by Nikita Meščerskij, the editor of the Slavonic text of Josephus and author of a critical study of the text published in the Soviet Union (Meščerskij 1958). Nikita Meščerskij attributed almost all the divergences between the Greek and the Slavonic to the ingenuity and initiative of the Slavonic translator, whom Meščerskij saw as working from a manuscript very close to (but not identical to) the surviving Greek text. In the lengthy Introduction to his critical edition of Josephus, Meščerskij strongly argues that the Slavonic Josephus should be viewed as a composition of the translator and thus an original work of Old Russian literature. According to Meščerskij, the Slavonic Josephus is a work of prime importance for Slavists and students of Old Russian literature, but of secondary interest to those working on the original text of *Jewish War* itself.

In an attempt to bring this controversy to a wider readership and enable non-Slavists to draw their own conclusions on the basis of a reliable translation of the Slavonic text, Meščerskij’s edition has been published in an English translation alongside the previously available translation of the Greek text (Leeming and Leeming 2003). This edition, in which Thackeray’s English translation of the Greek is laid out with an English translation of the Slavonic text, along with the critical apparatus for the Slavonic text, cannot solve the problem of the relationship of the Slavonic text with the extant Greek. It has, however, helped to clarify some issues involved and raised exciting new questions. Most recently, Pichhadze (1997) has edited the Slavonic Josephus on the basis of manuscripts not used by Meščerskij.

26.2 History of the Text

The Berendts/Eisler theory rests on the assumption that Josephus's own first version of *Jewish War* survived until it was translated into Slavonic and was then lost. Is this theory historically plausible?

The earliest manuscript of the Slavonic Josephus dates from 1463. It gives no hint as to where, when, and by whom the text was originally translated, though every scholar working on the text assumes that the translation was done at least one hundred years before this date. Dates for its translation as divergent as the tenth century to the fourteenth have been suggested. The earliest possible date for any original composition or translation into Slavonic is the ninth century, when the Byzantine brothers Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles to the Slavs, devised a Slavonic alphabet and set about systematically translating the scriptures, the liturgy, and unspecified books for their new converts in Moravia (present-day Bulgaria) using a dialect identified as "Old Church Slavonic."

At least one eminent scholar suggests that Josephus's work was among a group of texts translated by the first school of Slavonic translators founded by Cyril and Methodius. Most scholars, however, including Meščerskij, ascribe the translation to a later school. Rus, the capital of which was Kiev, now in the Ukraine, was converted to Christianity in the late tenth century under King Vladimir. The translators who worked here wrote in a dialect which is called "Old Russian," similar but not identical to Old Church Slavonic. These Kievan translators are credited with the translation of Josephus on the grounds that many dialectal forms found in the Slavonic Josephus are compatible with Old Russian. Many scholars, however, have been tempted to emphasize the cultural achievements of Kievan Rus (forerunner of modern Russia) to the detriment of other translation schools (Obolensky 1965, 60). Meščerskij points out that the text was probably being copied in the late thirteenth century (1958, 61). Most recently, Anatolii Alekseev (2007, 513–518) confidently attributes the translation to a Jewish milieu in fourteenth-century Galicia (the area around Lvov). The latest date possible for the translation is the mid-fifteenth century, the date of the earliest manuscript. The text was subsequently read very widely. At least thirty manuscripts survive. In some, *Jewish War* is copied as a separate work. In others, it is combined with the Byzantine chronicles of Malalas and Hamartolus to form a seamless Chronograph of world history.

26.3 Divergences between the Greek and Slavonic Texts

The many divergences of the Slavonic from the extant Greek have traditionally been placed in the following categories on the assumption that

the Greek text as we have it is the original, the pivot of reference: “omissions” from the Slavonic text (i.e., passages found in the Greek but not in the Slavonic) and “additions” to it (i.e., passages found in the Slavonic but not in the Greek). Although these terms of necessity are tendentious, they will be used here for the sake of brevity.

The most obvious “omissions” and “additions” were noted by Meščerskij in his Introduction. The parallel edition has, however, shown that the differences between the two versions are not confined to these. Many further minor “omissions” and “additions” have been brought to light. Sometimes insignificant in terms of content, these minor divergences illuminate the relationship between the two versions. Those found in Books 4 and 5 will be described below.

A third category of divergence between the Greek and Slavonic is that some material, while not differing in substance, differs in presentation. So a noteworthy feature of the Slavonic text is the elaboration of speeches. The Greek may merely mention that a speech was made; the Slavonic includes the text of the speech itself. There are many instances of this throughout the book. Though there are several speeches in the Greek text, there is a preference for indirect speech. The Greek text reports the words of a character; in Slavonic, the character speaks directly, rendering the Slavonic account much more vivid and immediate than the Greek. A notable rearrangement of the Greek material is in the account of Titus’s council of war where the Greek text vaguely states various options. The Slavonic attributes one option to the young men, another to the middle-aged, and a third to the old. Here there is dramatic tension absent from the Greek. Is it at all plausible that this preference for direct speech can be attributed to Josephus?

26.4 “Omissions”

The Slavonic Josephus contains many “omissions” in comparison to the Greek. They are not evenly distributed throughout the seven books of the work. Books 2, 3 and 4 are severely abridged in Slavonic, whereas Books 5, 6 and 7 are translated almost in their entirety.

Book 1 contains the most glaring “omission”: the entire prologue. Here Josephus stresses his credentials as a historian of the war, informing the reader that he was an eyewitness to the events portrayed. He criticizes other accounts of the campaign, dismissing them on the grounds that, while aiming to portray the grandeur of the Romans, they belittle the Jews as an enemy and thus the Romans’ achievement as their conquerors. He provides a synopsis of the entire work, book by book. The Slavonic text, on the other hand, begins

with the statement found in the Greek *Jewish War* (1.31) that there was discord among the powerful Jews at the time when Epiphanes was disputing the rule of Syria with Ptolemy. The omission of the prologue, written for Josephus's second, Greek, version is, of course, entirely consistent with the hypothesis that the Slavonic text was based on Josephus's first version. Other omissions in Book 1 range from a word or two to entire episodes, such as Julius Caesar's stay in Egypt (*War* 1.187–192), Herod's rule in Galilee (*War* 1.304–309), and Herod's construction of Caesarea (*War* 1.409–414). Interestingly, some substantial omissions are made good in the Slavonic by citations from two Byzantine chronicles, those of Hamartolus and Malalas. Meščerskij (and so the parallel edition) clearly annotates these citations. In places, the Slavonic Josephus is an "indissoluble web" of the three texts. Could this indicate that the translator was aware that he was working from a defective manuscript and tried to make good the deficiencies of his original by combining it with excerpts from the other chronicles?

The "omissions" of the Slavonic text are not confined to the substantial passages identified by Meščerskij, however. They permeate the whole text. Henry Leeming (2005) lists many such minor "omissions" in Book 1 and points out that many of them are compatible with what we know of the readership of Josephus's two versions. He notes in particular the explanations of Jewish terms absent from the Slavonic but present in the Greek. So, for example, in *Jewish War* 1.63, the Greek has "the ... Cuthaeans, who dwell around the temple modelled on that of Jerusalem" where the Slavonic merely has "the Cuthaeans" and, in *Jewish War* 1.110, the Greek explains that the Pharisees are "a certain group of Jews" whereas the Slavonic merely has "the Pharisees." Josephus himself states that he wrote the first version of *Jewish War* for Jews, the second for non-Jews, Greeks and Romans. The absence of these glosses, apparently inserted for the benefit of a non-Jewish readership, from the Slavonic version supports the hypothesis that the text from which it was translated was composed for a Jewish readership that had no need of such explanations.

26.5 "Additions"

The most striking divergence between the Slavonic and Greek versions of *Jewish War*, and that which excited the attention of Berendts, Eisler, and others, is the presence in the Slavonic version of lengthy passages or "additions" not found in the extant Greek text. Looked at from a Greek perspective, these passages are indeed Slavonic "additions" to the established Greek text, though if the Slavonic is an accurate representation of Josephus's first version, they should rather be seen as conscious omissions when the text was rewritten in Greek.

Berendts and Eisler classified these “additions” according to their content, depending on whether or not they refer to the life of Christ. The “additions” concerned with the ministry of Christ are termed “Christological.” Without these “Christological additions” the Slavonic Josephus would not have sparked such controversy among New Testament scholars.

Chapters in Roman numerals refer to Meščerskij, those in Arabic numerals refer to Niese:

- Book 1:
 - Chapter XX = 400. A lengthy account of the arrival of the Magi at the court of Herod and the massacre of the Innocents.
- Book 2:
 - Chapter VII.II = 110. A lengthy passage concerning John the Baptist with a direct quotation from the Gospel of Matthew in two of the Slavonic manuscripts. John is nowhere named (a similar passage is present in Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* 18.116).
 - Chapter IX.III = 174. The Slavonic contains a lengthy account of the ministry of a man who worked miracles, whose deeds were divine (not referred to by name). The passage fits into an account of Pilate’s governorship. The Jewish leaders informed Pilate of the wonderworker’s doings from an understandable fear of the Romans. Pilate sent for the wonderworker but released him when he realized that he was not a rebel, and besides, he had cured Pilate’s wife. The lawyers then gave Pilate thirty talents to kill the wonderworker, Pilate gave his permission, and they crucified the wonderworker. This account diverges in many points from the canonical Gospel accounts of these events.
 - Chapter XI.VI = 220. The preaching of the servants of the wonderworker, promising freedom from slavery, is absent from the Greek.
- Book 5:
 - Chapter V.II = 195. Addition of a fourth inscription naming Jesus, a king who had not reigned, crucified because he foretold the destruction of the city.
 - Chapter V.IV = 214. After the description of the veil of the temple, the Slavonic adds a reference to the rending of the veil in two when the “benefactor, man and by his actions not a man, was for reward handed over to be killed.” The Slavonic goes on to wonder about the resurrection, the author not knowing

whether to believe that the man rose from the dead or was taken away by his friends. The author believes that a dead man can only rise if assisted by the prayer of a righteous man, or if he is an angel, or a heavenly power, or God. Though this passage is ostensibly about Jesus' resurrection, there is a complete lack of orthodox Christian faith in these words.

- Chapter XIII.VII = 567. Manneus, who in the Greek is described as the son of Lazarus, is, according to the Slavonic, the nephew of Lazarus “whom Jesus raised from the grave.”

The “additions” referring to the birth of Jesus, his crucifixion, and the works of his followers have been seen to represent an attempt by a Christian to place the life of Jesus within the historical context of *Jewish War*. Thus, the addition of the arrival of the Magi at Herod's court, of an inscription concerning Jesus to the three in the Greek text, and of the rending of the veil of the temple, have been attributed to the translator. A note of caution should be struck here, however, before these passages are dismissed as late interpolations. Jesus is rarely referred to by name (see below). Elsewhere he is the “wonderworker” or the “king who did not reign” or some other term. Why would a Christian be reticent about naming Jesus? Further, many of the passages simply do not tally with the canonical Gospels. On the basis of the theology of the “additions,” Agourides and Tsarnits (1954) suggest a late second- or early third-century date for their composition. It would certainly have been heresy for a medieval Christian translator to depart from the Gospel accounts. To a medieval Christian, Jesus was the Savior, the Word of God made flesh, the Messiah. Why would the Christian writer not wish to make his debt to the Gospels everywhere as explicit as in Chapter 13.7 = 567 of Book 5, where Lazarus, father (or uncle) of Mannaus, is in the Slavonic identified as that Lazarus “whom Jesus raised from the grave”? A Christian writing for a Christian readership would surely have no hesitation in explicitly naming the Son of God.

Forty-one substantial “additions” to the Slavonic text were identified by Meščerskij, unevenly distributed throughout the seven books. A study of the parallel texts shows that there are many more “additions” to the Slavonic text than this. The following is an account of the “additions” apparent from a study of the parallel texts of Books 4 and 5. This may help to put the “Christological additions” in context. (In his Introduction, Meščerskij noted only five additions in each book.)

Numbers in Roman numerals refer to Meščerskij, Arabic numerals refer to Niese:

- Book 4:

- Chapter I.III = 16. The Romans' thoughts about the Jews of the besieged town of Gamala are in indirect speech in Greek; in the

Slavonic, they are put into direct speech and expanded.

- Chapter I.IV = 23 and 26. The Slavonic includes the detail that the Romans attacking Gamala were hampered by their “heavy arms.”
- Chapter I.V = 34. The Slavonic comments that Vespasian’s courage in battle “was not human but from God.”
- Chapter I.X = 76. The Slavonic adds the detail that the storm “scattered dust in their [the Jews’] eyes” as well as blowing back their missiles.
- Chapter I.X = 77. The Slavonic comments that at that time divine assistance favored the Romans; the Greek does not mention God here at all.
- Chapter II.II = 93–96. The Slavonic puts Titus’s offer of peace into direct speech.
- Chapter III.VIII = 157. The Slavonic comments that with the elevation of Phanni to the priesthood by lot, the “prophecy of abomination in the holy place was fulfilled.”
- Chapter III.XI = 193. The Slavonic explains that the Zealots “were called by this name as if they were zealous for freedom. And they had no zeal for freedom but committed every lawless act.”
- Chapter III.XI = 204. The Zealots were “firing from the porticoes and chambers” of the temple.
- Chapter IV.IV = 273. As well as the Idumaeans’ taunt that the besieged are prepared to admit the Romans, crowning the gates with garlands, the Slavonic adds “and rugs.”
- Chapter V.II = 314. “And when morning came” is added to the Slavonic; a reasonable deduction from the context.
- Chapter V.II = 316. The taunts of the Idumaeans over the bodies of Ananus and Jesus are put into direct speech and expanded.
- Chapter V.IV = 337. The Slavonic adds, in direct speech, the questions of the judges at the trial of Zacharias and the Zealots’ answer.
- Chapter VI.I = 362. The Slavonic comments that God sanctioned the curse of Nîger not for the sake of Nîger alone, but also “for the sake of other righteous men who were killed at the time of Herod and Archelaus and Antipas and Pilate and Agrippa and up to the present. For all the accumulated blood drowned the city.”

- Chapter VI.III = 383. Rather than merely stating that the penalty for burying a relative was death, the Slavonic has, “And if someone dared to throw earth from his sleeve secretly on his dead kin lying there, they would kill him also.”
 - Chapter VII.II = 401. The Slavonic contains a lengthy discourse on the Sicarii disregarding the history of the Jewish people and the examples it sets.
 - Chapter VII.II = 403. On massacring the inhabitants of Engaddi, the Sicarii “returned, howling like wolves, joyful that they had shown their valour, accursed [ones].”
 - Chapter VIII.I = 445. In the Greek, Vespasian fortifies a camp and leaves the Fifth Legion there. In Slavonic, he leaves the Fifth Legion there “with the standards too, in order that the natives should think all his forces were there.”
 - Chapter IX.I = 490. The besieged in Jerusalem were watched by the Zealots: “Those who wanted to fetch grain or hay or bring in wood could not pass.”
 - Chapter IX.VI = 526. The traitor James persuaded the Idumaeans to surrender to Simon, exaggerating Simon’s forces and, in the Greek, being the first to flee. The Slavonic explains how some soldiers “attached to the [horses’] tails conifer branches, they drove [them] so that great clouds of dust would appear. And James started to argue with the Idumaeans saying: ‘Is it because you have no graves, that you crave them here too!’ And having seen the soldiers and the dust behind them, they thought the rear more numerous than the van.”
 - Chapter IX.IX = 547. The tactics of the Battle of Bedriacum between Otho and Vitellius are recounted in more detail in Slavonic, namely Vitellius’s cunning use of three-pronged irons to disable the horses of Otho as Otho pursued him.
- Book 5:
 - Chapter V.II = 195. Addition of a fourth inscription (concerning Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the temple) to the three hung upon the temple.
 - Chapter V.IV = 214. After the description of the veil of the temple, the Slavonic adds a reference to the rending of the veil in two when the “benefactor, man and by his actions not a man, was for reward handed over to be killed.”
 - Chapter VI.IV = 278. The actual words of the rival factions in Jerusalem are elaborated in the Slavonic, whereas in Greek the

speech is reported.

- Chapter VII.III = 307. The Slavonic reports the clash of arms and grinding of swords and screaming to the clouds, as some groaned and sobbed and others cheered, rendering the account of the battle much more vivid than the Greek.
- Chapter VII.IV = 328. Account of how the Jewish centurion Phoia tricked the Roman commander Cerealius to negotiate and crushed him by pushing a stone block onto him. This incident is completely absent from the Greek.
- Chapter IX.I = 355. The Slavonic links the destruction of Jerusalem with the prophecy of Daniel.
- Chapter IX.IV = 389. The Slavonic adds that Cyrus released the Jews at the prayer of Daniel.
- Chapter XII.I = 491. The description of Titus's council of war is much more vivid in the Slavonic, with the addition of a short speech of Titus's calling for advice, and the suggestion of the youngest, who advocated attacking the walls, then the middle-aged who advocated building embankments, then the old who advocated besieging the Jews. The Greek has no direct speech here. The Slavonic at 496 contains an interesting detail, that there were no trees and soil left and it was necessary to bring them from 120 stades away.
- Chapter XII.II = 503. The Slavonic adds the comment that the one who did more honor of his general would get greater gifts; the Greek does not mention gifts at all.
- Chapter XIII.VI = 565. The Slavonic adds that the perpetrators of sacrilege smeared themselves with oil, "with more than one hin, which is a measure of 6 litres."
- Chapter XIII.VII = 567. Manneus, who in the Greek is described as the son of Lazarus, is, according to the Slavonic, the nephew of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the grave.

26.5.1 "Additions" which Can Be Ascribed to a Translator or Copyist

There is no proof as to when the "Christological additions" were made. Is it possible to discern any editorial agendas in the "additions" listed above?

A striking feature is the presence of details of military tactics in the Slavonic, such as Vitellius's effective use of three-pronged irons to disable the horses of

Otho in battle and Simon's clever ruse of attaching conifer branches to his horses' tails to give the impression that his army was more extensive than it actually was. Meščerskij confidently attributes both "additions" to the translator and further suggests that he was a military man, or working for a patron who was interested in military affairs. This theory has much to commend it. An intelligent translator familiar with battle would deduce from the Greek text that if the missiles of the Jews were blown back at them by the storm, dust would also be blown into their eyes, blinding them. He might also deduce that the Romans were hampered "by heavy arms" in their initial assault on Gamala and include this detail. Would not a translator familiar with the tactics of war likewise add the fact that Vespasian cunningly left all his standards with the Fifth Legion to give his enemies the impression that his entire army was stationed there? Further Slavonic "additions" describe the actual groans and screams of a battle. The whole of Josephus's *Jewish War*, a detailed eyewitness account of a military campaign written by a commander, would have appealed to military men of similar rank within their society to that held by Josephus himself. If *Jewish War* was for such readers a practical textbook, a relevant guide to how to conduct a siege and to govern, rather than an account of the distant past of merely antiquarian or theological interest, the further addition of handy tactics would have been very useful (see [Chapter 11](#) by Roth in this volume).

A medieval military man at court would likewise have been interested in the details of ceremonies not found in the Greek. The number of horses and servants at Herod's funeral are present in the Slavonic version, reminiscent of the accounts of medieval heralds whose job it was to record every detail of such a major ceremony. The source for these details is not established, however. It is conceivable that they are authentic.

Further "additions" are not out of place in medieval society. So, in the Slavonic, the Roman commander, Titus, offers his men gifts according to their conduct in battle (the Greek text does not mention gifts). The Slavonic comments negatively on the elevation of a low-born man, Phanni, to the priesthood, attributing the destruction of Jerusalem to this action (on Josephus and the priesthood, see [Chapter 17](#) by McLaren in this volume). This point of view is compatible with that of a member of medieval society: each had his own rank. The Slavonic has the gates of the city adorned with "rugs" as well as garlands, a well-established medieval practice.

26.5.2 Other "Additions" in the Slavonic: Could They Be the Work of Josephus?

Many other "additions" cannot be attributed to a translator. What motive would he have had for adding such random details as the quantity of oil used

by the perpetrators of sacrilege and the precise distance from which wood had to be brought? These facts, and others like them, are more convincingly explained as already present in the manuscript the translator was working from.

More substantial than these details, puzzling as they are, is the “addition” concerning the burying of the dead. Whereas the Greek blandly states that the living were prevented from burying corpses on pain of death, the Slavonic has the precise and vivid detail, probably taken from an eyewitness account, that if the living so much as scattered earth hidden in their sleeves on the dead, never mind burying them, they were themselves put to death. In the Slavonic, the living were prevented from performing even the most minimal, token burial rites. This reflects more accurately than the Greek the situation of the terrorized and desperate people of Jerusalem and again can comfortably be explained as already present in the text the translator was working from.

Another “addition” which probably dates back to a more reliable version of the text than the surviving Greek is the account of the cunning of the Jewish centurion, Phoia. Like the “Christological additions,” this consists of a lengthy chapter dealing with a discrete episode; unlike those “additions,” it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Gospel story. There is no discernible motive for the translator adding this episode. The Phoia episode does not obtrude in the Slavonic. This is surely an instance where an episode has been omitted from the Greek text as we have it, rather than being added to the Slavonic.

Another instance of an “addition” which could not have been made by the Slavonic translator is the precise text of the oath taken by the Essenes. Arie Rubinstein (1956) wonders what motive there could have been for addition of material on the Essenes.

Finally, the Slavonic contains many “additions” in which Old Testament texts are referred to. The events of Josephus’s day are linked to Old Testament prophecies, especially the Book of Daniel. A medieval translator could have been aware of these prophecies and may have been tempted to add them to the Greek, especially if he was writing an entire history of the world such as the *Chronograph*.

It is possible to ascribe these “additions” to Josephus himself, however. The Greek text, composed for a non-Jewish readership, lacks such allusions, with one striking exception. The speeches Josephus puts in his own mouth are replete with references to the Old Testament. One of the characteristics the author attributes to himself is thus his interest in the links between the prophets and the present. The presence of these Old Testament references throughout the text thus corroborates the hypothesis that the Slavonic is based on Josephus’s own text.

26.6 Are Any Conclusions Possible?

Two problems have been at the heart of study of the Slavonic Josephus. Josephus himself states that he composed two versions of *Jewish War*: could the text from which the Slavonic Josephus was translated possibly be one of them? The Slavonic Josephus contains additions which provide evidence for the ministry of John the Baptist, the “wonderworker” and his followers: are these “additions” genuine, despite their absence from the Greek text?

A certain humility is called for here, a recognition of which questions our material can provide answers to. Most texts that survive from antiquity come down to us through a series of intermediaries who may have had access to very different sources from those we now possess. To give an idea of the complexity of the problem, here is a list of the hands through which Josephus’s *Jewish War* almost certainly passed on its way to publication in a twentieth- or twenty-first-century edition. Those marked with an asterisk must have existed, but do not themselves survive. Those marked with two asterisks may have existed, but the proof that they did so is not incontrovertible.

- *****Josephus’s first draft, α*** , written in his native tongue for a Jewish readership.
- ****Josephus’s Greek edition, β*** , written, according to the Prologue, for non-Jews. Is this an adaptation of α ? Who actually wrote it, Josephus or his assistants? Was it at this point that glosses were added to the Greek for a non-Jewish readership?
- *****The original translation into Greek of α*** , if this was written in the vernacular. The translator here could have made changes, possibly in consultation with the author.
- ****Early (pre-Byzantine) copyists of β*** . Who were they: Jews, pagans or Christians, or all three? How much of the text published by Niese would they recognize? Given the slender testimony of the sole (third-century) papyrus fragment, which in forty-four fragmentary lines contains nine readings different from those of any extant manuscript, according to Feldman (1984, 25), was the text very different from any we have now?
- *****Early copyists of α*** . Was there any incentive for these men to add any passages or omit them or otherwise tamper with the text? Josephus’s *Jewish War* was not a canonical Christian text, and thus was vulnerable to deliberate alteration. Theological considerations have ascribed the “Christological additions” to the second to third centuries C.E. Deliberate alteration aside, what if, early along in the copying process, a copyist had to deal with a defective manuscript? Would he

have made good any problems with his text with reference to the Latin Josephus? Did he have a tendency, for example, to put passages into direct speech?

- **Translator into Slavonic*: there is no consensus as to whether he had before him a manuscript recognizable as α or β . If β , did he treat the manuscript he was working from with atypical freedom, adding passages, some inexplicably, omitting others? Was he working from one manuscript or more? Did he combine the text of Josephus with that of Malalas and Hamartolus, or were these three chronicles already combined in the text he was translating? Where and when did he work: ninth-century Bulgaria, eleventh-century Kiev, fourteenth-century Galicia, or elsewhere? Was he Jewish or Christian? Was he translating for a noble military patron?
- **Copyists of the Slavonic version*. Was there any incentive for them to alter the manuscripts they were copying from? Would copyists working in Kiev or Galicia, for example, update dialectal forms of Old Church Slavonic? Would a later copyist have the initiative to “correct” a translation of α if he got hold of a Greek manuscript of β , thereby contaminating the Slavonic version? Were military details added at this point?
- And finally, the *copyists of the existing manuscripts of the Slavonic*.

The Slavonic Josephus survives thanks to the work of many copyists over almost two millennia. It is easy to forget when looking at a printed text that none of the scribes on whose work our accepted version of a text depends had a photocopier. Each was fallible, each had his own preoccupations, maybe his own initiative, certainly his own relationship, good or bad, with the text he was entrusted with copying. Among them were doubtless intelligent men capable of much more than mechanical copying (itself no easy task) and of critically correcting the text before them by reference to other texts and manuscripts they had to hand. The search for the origins of the Slavonic Josephus has been hampered by an understandable desire to seek a single answer to solve the whole problem of the relationship between the Greek and Slavonic texts once and for all. A definitive solution to the problem of the Slavonic Josephus is elusive because this text, like so many others, is a complex of discrete textual problems.

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FURTHER READING

The following is a guide to translations and editions of Slavonic Josephus and other first-century C.E. texts.

The Slavonic Josephus has been edited in the original by:

Istrin, V. 1934–1938. *La Prise de Jérusalem de Josèphe le Juif*. Paris: Institut d’études slaves (with a translation into French by P. Pascal and A. Vaillant).

Meščerskij, Nikita. 1958. *Istorija Iudejskoj Vojny Iosifa Flavija v drevnerusskom perevode*. Moscow: Izdat. Akad. Nauk SSSR.

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For the translation of the first four books into German:

Berendts, Alexander and Konrad Grass. 1924–1927. *Flavius Josephus vom Jüdischen Kriege, Buch I–IV*. Dorpat: C. Mattiesen.

For the full translation into English (published alongside Thackeray’s more literary translation of the Greek version):

Leeming, Henry and Katherine Leeming. 2003. *Josephus’ Jewish War and its Slavonic Version: A Synoptic Comparison of the English Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray with the Critical Edition by N. A. Meščerskij of the Slavonic Version in the Vilna Manuscript Translated into English by H. Leeming and L. Osinkina*. Leiden: Brill.

The English translation of Meščerskij’s scholarly introduction and commentary also brings his expertise to a non-Russian-speaking readership, though his work must be used with caution. Prudence required him to

approach Josephus's writings in a way that would not invite the disapproval of the communist authorities. His scholarship is criticized by Lunt and Taube (1988). Hansack (2007, 495–512) outlines the state of recent research.

For other ostensibly first-century material in Slavonic translation:

Elliott, J. Keith. 1993. *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press/New York: Oxford University Press. Notes Slavonic translations alongside the oriental.

Orlov, Andrei. 2009. *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*. Leiden: Brill. Examines the Jewish texts the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Slavonic Enoch, both texts surviving only in Slavonic, and provides a bibliography of work on the Slavonic Josephus (292–296), and a bibliography of research into the manuscripts in which the Slavonic Josephus is copied (325–328).

CHAPTER 27

Josephus in Renaissance Italy

Silvia Castelli

27.1 Introduction

Since the first centuries of the Common Era, Josephus's work has been widely used by Christian writers, of both the Western and the Eastern traditions, primarily due to his connection to the world of scripture. This is true for *Judean War* to the time of Eusebius (Schrekenberg 1984; Inowlocki 2006), and even more so for *Judean Antiquities*. A close comparison of some key passages in the sixth-century Latin translation—promoted by Cassiodorus in the monastery of Vivarium on the Italian peninsula—with Josephus's Greek text of *Judean Antiquities* reveals the influence of the Vulgate on the translation of Josephus's work: for example, in the account of the punishment of the first sin, Josephus (*Ant.* 1.50) states that God placed poison beneath the serpent's tongue, designating the animal as an enemy to humans and advising them to direct blows to the serpent's head, where the source of the danger was located. There is no mention of a woman in the Greek Josephus; in the Latin version (Blatt 1958, 130), on the other hand, it is the woman herself who is instructed to strike the serpent's head, as in the Vulgate version of Genesis 3:15 (on the ancient Latin translations of Josephus, see [Chapter 21](#) by Levenson and Martin in this volume). In the eighth century, the Venerable Bede could maintain that questions regarding the width of the Tabernacle could be answered by reference to Josephus, “an excellent Jew from priestly origin, learned both in the Holy and in the secular Writings” (*De tabernaculo* 1.335). Moving from West to East, a century later one of the major writers of the Eastern Syrian tradition, Isho'dad of Merv, in his commentaries, appealed to Josephus for extra-biblical details (Castelli 2012).

Coming to the period of the Renaissance, it is clear at the outset from some of the European editions of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* that the author's appeal lay primarily in his connection with the Bible. The edition *in folio* printed in Cologne in 1524 by Cervicornus (alias Hirtzhorn) and Hittorpius (alias Hittorp), reprinted in 1528 in Paris by Savetier, provides an index of the *loci paralleli* in scripture, stating in the subtitle that Josephus's work was edited “with index and annotations, by which what corresponds to the Bible, and what does not, can be easily recognized.” In the edition of Lyons (*contra* Schrekenberg 1968, 7) of 1546 by Sébastien Gryphe, one finds in *Judean Antiquities* 11.6 an annotation stating that “the rest of the stories of this

eleventh book are not in the Bible.”

This close bond between Josephus and the Bible is confirmed by the reception of Josephus during the Italian Renaissance, as we can see from an analysis of the context of the translations into the vernacular—in particular, those of *Judean Antiquities*—from the second half of the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. Josephus is regarded as an esteemed ancient historian, especially in the late fifteenth century, but during the sixteenth century he is mainly seen as a useful companion to the Bible. When the vernacular versions of the Bible were banned (to varying degrees) by various editions of the Index of the Prohibited Books in the second half of the sixteenth century, Josephus’s Italian translations became increasingly popular on the peninsula, even becoming a valuable alternative to the vernacular Bible.

27.2 The House of Este and Josephus’s First Italian Translations

Considering this, one would expect the first translation of *Judean Antiquities* into Italian to have been commissioned by an ecclesiastical customer, as was the case with the Latin version promoted by Cassiodorus in the sixth century. Yet the context of the first Italian version of Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* is instead a Renaissance duchy. According to a note dated November 24, 1472, Andrea da le Vieze, the illustrator and writer of the House of Este in Ferrara, received 16 “lire” and 7 “soldi” for an illuminated book entitled *Josephus on the Antiquity*, translated and written by Battista from the convent of St. Paul, (Fava and Salmi 1950, 165, n. 74). This translation is by the Carmelite brother Battista Panetti, Prior of the Carmelite convent of St. Paul in Ferrara, who was a collector of manuscripts, translator of some of John Chrysostom’s homilies into Latin, and himself the author of several epigrams and historical works in Latin (Indice biografico italiano, see “Panetti Battista/Battista Panezio”). The beautiful manuscript, which can be seen in the Estense Library of Modena (Est. Ital. 545; see [Figure 27.1](#)), consists of a 367–I page parchment manuscript *in folio* with rich illuminations (Fava and Salmi 1950, 165–167). The translation was commissioned during the dukedom of Hercules of Este (1471–1505), a ruler passionate about ancient—mainly military—history, and under whose government the Ferrara Renaissance entered its full splendor. He commissioned the translation of several ancient historians into the vernacular, including among others, Herodotus, as well as Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* by Matteo Maria Boiardo. The *Cyropaedia* was copied, illuminated, and bound by the same illustrator as Josephus’s manuscript, Andrea da le Vieze (Ghisalberti 1960, see “Dalle Veze”), only a few months prior to producing the text of Josephus (April 9, 1472; Hermann 1994, 276). Appian was translated by Pier Candido Decembrio, and Procopius of Caesarea, Diodorus

Siculus, Arrian, Appian, and Cassius Dio by the physician and humanist, Niccolò Leonicensio, who, however, did not translate Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* (contra Schreckenberg 1979, 176); the reference presented by Schreckenberg (Fava 1925, 94) indicates in fact that "[among the vulgarizations of different authors] are included the *Cyropedia* translated by Boiardo, the *Judean Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus, and the Appianus translated by Nicolò Leonicensio."

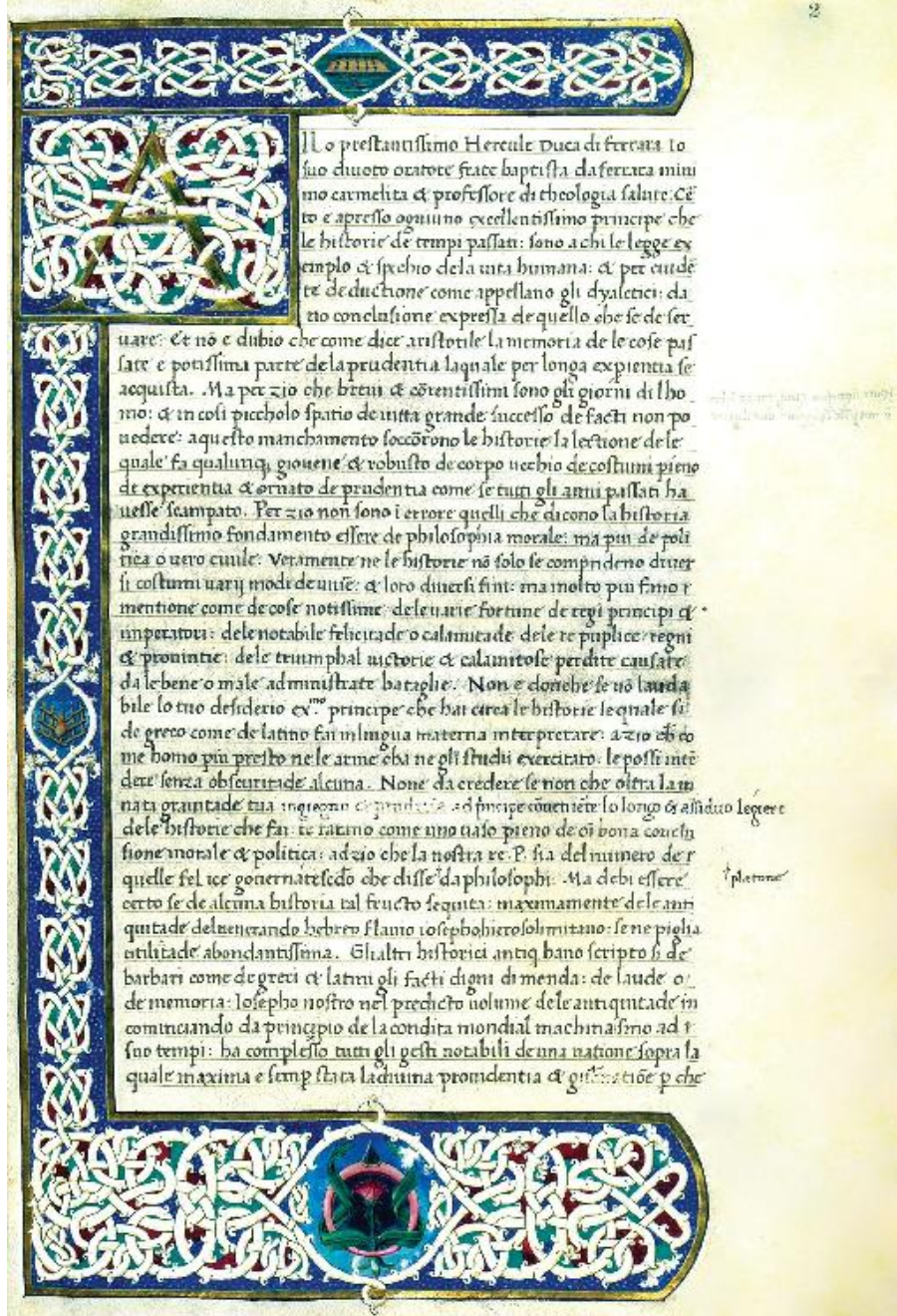


Figure 27.1 Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Modena, Ms. It. 545 = alpha.O.3.4, Flavius Josephus, *De antiquitate Judaica*, fol. 2r.

The first translation of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* by Panetti can be read within the context of the vulgarization of ancient historians in the Ferrara household and as a “mirror for the prince” (*speculum principis*), a work that

was meant to edify the prince (*princeps*) and enhance his good government. Accordingly, in the dedication (see [Figure 27.1](#), folio 2 recto) Panetti maintains that:

It is not but laudable your desire, my excellent ruler, regarding the histories that you have had translated both from Greek and Latin into the vernacular ... your long and continuous reading of histories will make you a vase full of every good moral and political decision, so that our state might be numbered among those rightly governed by the philosophers, according to what Plato said (in the margin: “Plato”).

(folio 2 recto, lines 23–25; 28–31; see [Figure 27.1](#))

The *Judean Antiquities* “of the venerable Jew Flavius Josephus” does not merely serve a didactic purpose. The translator further notes that this work is even more revered since it contains many admirable works of God in favor of the Jewish nation where the Messiah was to become incarnate, and also since one can find “the foundations of our faith, the norm of the law, and the human principles” (“li fondamenti de la fede nostra et la norma de lege et precepti humani,” folio 2 verso).

[B]ut you should be certain that fruit can be obtained from history. And especially from the antiquities of the venerable Jew Flavius Josephus one can get the most abundant outcome ... Our Josephus, in the abovementioned book of the antiquities, starting from the beginning of the created world up to his time, had collected all the glorious deeds of the nation, above which greatest has always been the divine providence and the divine rule and government, for the great Messiah was to incarnate in that nation.

(folio 2 recto, lines 31–39; 2 verso line 1; see [Figure 27.1](#))

Unlike the work of other historians, Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* does not just function as a folly for the prince, but is considered a work with a high ethical and religious perspective, especially in the view of this Carmelite brother. An analogous situation can be observed with the vulgarization of another Jewish Hellenistic work, which was translated by the House of Este a few years before. Hercules’ predecessor, Borso (1450–1471), had in 1467 commissioned the translation of the *Letter of Aristeas* by the Florentine humanist Bartolomeo Della Fonte (alias Fontius; Ghisalberti 1960, see “Della Fonte, Bartolomeo”), a commentator on Livy, Persius, Juvenal, and Aristotle’s *Poetics*. A few years before the translation of Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* by Panetti, Della Fonte had dedicated his translation to the Duke Borso, stating that in the *Letter of Aristeas* the prince would find “wisdom” (*sapientia*) and “doctrine” (*doctrina*) through the answers of the seventy-two Jerusalem wise men (Vaccari 1952, 2–23). Fontius’s statement makes clear that the *Letter of Aristeas* serves as a *speculum principis* in Ferrara; but, as with the case of Josephus, the work was of additional interest for the biblical

account, as is apparent in the following episode regarding the publication of the Italian Bible. The first Italian biblical translation was published in 1471 in Venice by Vindelino Spira, a few years after the translation of the *Letter of Aristeas* dedicated to Borso, and one year before the first Italian version of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* for Hercules. Shortly afterwards, in 1477, the second edition of the same Italian Bible was published with the *Letter of Aristeas* as an appendix and the editor of the second edition notes: "I have added as appendix the *Letter of Aristeas*, that matches very well with the Bible because of its account of several rituals and of the first (biblical) translation of which it narrates" (Vaccari 1952, 17). It is interesting that in both of these fifteenth-century prefaces, there is no mention of translation issues. However, it should be noted that the version of *Judean Antiquities* tends to be almost *ad verbum*, a preference of Hercules of Este (Dionisotti 1967, 158), and the language itself very close to the Latin.

As for the *Judean War*, the same Hercules of Este commissioned a translation (the exact year is unknown) preserved in the illuminated Laurentianus parchment manuscript San Marco 384, which bears as its title: "Of the war that occurred between the Jews and the Romans, composed in Greek by the Jew Josephus, and translated from Greek into Latin by Rufinus, and from Latin into the vernacular under commission of Sir Hercules of Este," (folio 1 recto) and dated 1451–1500 (1471, *terminus post quem*; on the manuscripts, De la Mare 1985, 548).

The best manuscripts of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* and *Judean War* in Italian were commissioned by the House of Este and promoted by Duke Hercules. Certainly, the manuscripts of the Italian version of the *Judean War* were more numerous. The manuscript preserved in the Laurenziana Library of Florence (Plut. 62.21) has no clear date but it is possibly earlier than the one commissioned by Hercules, while the manuscript currently located in the John Work Garrett Library, Johns Hopkins University (Gar 15), is dated to the second half of the fifteenth century.

27.3 Printed Editions in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century

A crucial date for Josephus's text was 1544, the year of the publication of Arnoldus Peraxylus Arlenius's first printed Greek edition, published by Froben in Basel. That year was also important for the Italian Josephus. The end of the fifteenth century had already seen the publication of an Italian translation of *Judean War*, following other European translations (Schreckenberg 1968, 2–3). The Italian version of *Judean War* was published in Florence by Bartolomeo Presbitero, in July 1493, and lacks a dedication by

the editor. The same version was republished by Filippo di Giunta (and heirs) in 1512 and 1526 respectively; in Venice by Vettor and Piero Ravano della Serena (1531; reprinted 1535, 1541), while a second edition of *Judean War* was published in Venice by Giovan Maria Bonello in 1532, later improved and corrected (1552; reprints by different publishers 1555, 1570, 1591).

A more accurate edition by Filippo di Giunta, dated July 1512, with 146 pages *in folio*, presents (1v) an anonymous preface, most likely added by the editor, praising the edifying purposes of history: the Jew Josephus is called a “most excellent historian” (“historico prestantissimo”), who “wrote a true history with the highest eloquence and elegance, not as heard from others but personally witnessed, in which he personally intervened and was present.” The editor emphasizes the grand dimensions of the Jewish War against the Romans, and refers to the destruction of Jerusalem narrated at the end of the book; both subjects—the war and the events that occurred in the holy city—would have appealed to a curious reader. In other words, Josephus’s Italian version of *Judean War* is presented by the editor as belonging to the classical historical tradition, enhancing both the virtue as well as the knowledge of its reader, according to the famous Ciceronian saying “history is the teacher of life” (“*historia magistra vitae*”; *De Oratore* 2.36). A slightly different tone, hinting at anti-Jewish prejudices—rather common in the Counter-Reformation atmosphere of the second half of the sixteenth century—is found forty years later (1552) between the lines of the preface of the slightly improved and corrected edition of *Judean War* by the Venetian printer Giovan Maria Bonello. In his address to the reader, Bonello (2 verso–3 recto) confirms his high esteem for Josephus who “despite being a Jew, in Greek eloquence is such a friend of Mercury that he cannot be put after Thucydides,” and invites his reader not to reject the authority of the author because of his Jewish nationality: on the contrary, in Josephus’s work one can find the name of Jesus Christ, and, because Josephus is an eyewitness, his testimony can be considered trustworthy for the events he narrates.

As was the case for most of the printed translations into other European languages, the Italian *Judean War* predates the *Judean Antiquities*. It was not until 1544 that we see the first printed edition of Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* in the vernacular. By then, Europe had already seen the Catalan (Barcelona 1482), German (Strassburg 1531, reprinted 1535 and 1539), and the French versions (1534, reprinted 1539, 1562). The 1544 Italian edition is not the publication of the same text that was translated by Panetti in 1472. A second version was completed by Pietro Lauro, a clergyman from Modena, and therefore named “Modenese,” who was very active in the field of vulgarizations, mainly of ancient historians. Pietro Lauro (Ghisalberti 1960, see “Lauro, Pietro”), while he was depicted as barely educated and untrustworthy by his more famous contemporary fellow-citizen, Castelvetro, and despite being suspected of a connection to some Reformation circles

(Seidel Menchi 1993, 164–165, 218), worked for several highly respected Venetian printers, including Gabriele Giolito. This edition of Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* was produced in Venice by a publisher of French origin, Vincenzo Vaugris (or Valgrisi; Ascarelli and Menato 1989, 375–376), who was tried in 1559 for his alleged sympathy for the Reformation (Grendler, 1975). Pietro Lauro dedicated his translation of Josephus to Lionora Gonzaga della Rovere, Duchess of Urbino. According to the preface, there were several reasons why the Duchess should be pleased to read his translations of the histories of Josephus from Latin into Italian: (1) they provided an account of the most pious people of the world who were elected by God; (2) the book is useful as a commentary on the sacred books of the Old Testament, especially since the events outlined briefly in scripture are clearer and more detailed in Josephus’s work; and (3) there are stories that relate to the New Testament and shed light on people and places mentioned in the Gospels, such as the preaching of John the Baptist and the author’s notable testimony (i.e., Josephus) about Jesus (on the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume). Pietro Lauro’s dedication to the Duchess of Urbino confirms the use of Josephus as a kind of companion to the Bible, for both Old and New Testaments, around the mid-sixteenth century.

As with the 1472 manuscript edition, no mention is made here of translation methods, apart from the allusion to the Latin language of the apograph, yet we can reasonably offer an hypothesis about the Latin edition used by Pietro Lauro. One can detect in his version the peculiar misreadings of the Latin translation. For example, in the episode of Dinah’s visit to Shechem in Genesis 34, Josephus (*Ant.* 1.337) depicts the girl as going to “see female clothing,” whereas the Latin Josephus makes the further claim that she goes “to buy it.” Rightly, Blatt (1958, 167) comments that the Latin *emptura* is a bad rendering of the Greek *opsomenê*. The Latin *emptura* is confirmed in the 1524 and 1534 Latin editions, and in Pietro Lauro’s version “*per comprare ornamenti da donna*” (1544, p. 29 verso, lines 8–9). Even where the manuscripts of the Latin Josephus were faithful to the Greek in rendering the names, the sixteenth-century Latin editions of *Judean Antiquities* preferred to follow the Vulgate.

27.4 The Tridentine Council

Two years before Lauro’s 1544 translation, the Congregation of the Inquisition was established, and in the sessions of March 1546, the issue of the translation of the Bible was discussed by the Tridentine Council. Nevertheless, the famous decree of April 8, 1546, “On the edition and use of the Sacred Books” (*De editione et usu sacrorum librorum*), following the “On the canonical Scriptures” (*De canonicis Scripturis*), did not address

specifically the issue of translations of the Bible into the vernacular. It was Paulus IV's *Index of the Prohibited Books* 1559—prepared under the auspices of the Congregation of the Inquisition chaired by Michele Ghislieri, the future Pope Pius V—that first allowed the use of, and even the act of keeping, translated Bibles, but only with permission of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. So reads the prohibition of 1559: “All Bibles written in a vernacular language, either French, Spanish, Italian, English or Dutch etc., can by no means be printed, read, or kept without the license of the Holy Office of the Holy Roman Inquisition” (De Bujanda, Davignon, and Stanek 1990, 325).

The phenomenon of biblical translation was synonymous, for its detractors, with the spread of Protestantism and heresy among the lower classes, not least among women (Fragnito 1997, 76, 280–281). Hence the extreme strictness of the 1559 *Index*, which, among others, prohibited the Talmud. The prohibition of vulgarized Bibles was certainly lessened by the Tridentine Council sessions of 1561–1564, so that, according to the fourth rule of the *Index Tridentinus*, once the issue had been discussed with a local confessor or priest, and provided that the Bibles were translated by Catholic authors and that they would not harm the reader, permission of a local bishop or inquisitor was only needed to allow the use of vernacular biblical translations (De Bujanda et al. 1990, 815). This modification can be understood as addressing the problem of the widespread ignorance of Latin among the lower clergy, specifically in rural and mountainous areas. The Papal bull *Dominici gregis* (1564) permitted the printing of scriptural translations to be resumed, resulting in several reprints between 1566 and 1567. These were, however, the last editions of complete translations of the Italian Bible until the mid-eighteenth century, due to the later development of restrictive rules that cancelled *de facto* the fourth rule of the *Index Tridentinus* by 1582 (Fragnito 1997, 95–121).

After the first prohibition in 1559, and even later in the century, a proliferation of commentaries, paraphrases of the biblical account, and texts related to scriptural topics appeared particularly on the Venetian market. In 1560, a second translation of Philo's *Life of Moses* (*Vita di Mosè*, Venezia, Nicolò Bevilacqua, 1560; translation by Giulio Ballino, *in quarto*) was published, following that of 1548 printed by Valgrisi but by a different translator; interestingly, translation issues now start to be addressed, and in the preface the author claims to follow a method of negotiating between literal and free translations (2 verso–3 recto). Pietro Lauro's version of Josephus was reprinted eight times by different Venetian publishers between 1560 and 1604 (Lorenzini 1560; Bonadio 1563–1564; Vidali 1574; Zoppini 1581; Cornetti 1585; Griffio 1589, 1591–1592; and Vecchi 1604). In 1593, a historical summary based on the Bible, Josephus, Hegesippus, Berossus, Philo, and others, with the life of Jesus, was printed in Bergamo (Bergamo, Comin Ventura) and enjoyed great success.

Meanwhile, in 1575, the famous Venetian publisher Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari was granted by the Venetian Senate the "*privilegio*" for a new translation of Josephus's complete works. In 1570, the same publisher brought out the Italian version of Philo's *On the Creation* (Agostino Ferentilli), and in 1574 the translation of *On Joseph*, a treatise that was reprinted in the same year in Venice by Zanetti, and the following year by Rampazetto with the addition of "the form of the perfect Christian described by Gregory of Nyssa." Francesco Baldelli was commissioned to translate Josephus in 1575; he was a highly educated scholar, a translator of Greek and Latin texts, as well as a poet and member of the Umoretti Academy in Bologna (Ghisalberti 1960, see "Baldelli, Francesco"). Baldelli had contributed to Giolito's historical series with the translation of Caesar's *Commentaries* (1554), Cassius Dio (1562), and Diodorus Siculus (1574 and 1575). Josephus's work should have been included in Giolito's prestigious "*collana istorica*," an ingenious editorial initiative never before undertaken by another Venetian printer (Ascarelli and Menato 1989, 191–192). The work, however, did not appear until 1581. Baldelli provides some reasons for the delay in his preface to *Judean War*: the translation was executed five years earlier, but was not published until then because of the plague in Venice (1575–1577), and the death of Gabriele himself. Yet his sons, Giovanni and Giovanni Paolo Giolito, managed to continue the project which was finally realized in 1581, with two reprints, 1582–1583 and 1589. In the preface to the volume of *Judean War* "that the most obstinate and perfidious Jewish nation had with the Romans" (2 recto–verso), Baldelli speaks of Josephus as a "noble and ancient writer" of histories, whose benefit for the reader is known to the addressee (3 recto). This volume of *Judean War* includes *Against Apion* and *4 Maccabees*. The inclusion of Josephus in the "*collana istorica*" indicated that the main purpose of Gabriele Giolito was to reach an educated audience with an interest in ancient history. Yet, the title of *Judean Antiquities* reads: "Of Flavius Iosephus on the Antiquities of the Jews Books 20 ... where there is mention of almost the complete Old Testament and of all the stories described by Moses in Genesis." It is not clear whether there was a shift in the intended audience from Gabriele Giolito to his sons. A third translation of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities* into the vernacular was promoted even though Pietro Lauro's version was still successful and continuously reprinted, most likely because Gabriele Giolito aimed at including a translation of better quality in his prestigious historical series.

In fact, if Baldelli's version is based on the Latin and not on the Greek text published about forty years earlier, as the translator maintains at the beginning of the first book of *Judean Antiquities*, a close comparison with the misreadings of the Latin, typical of the editions of the first half of the sixteenth century, shows that Baldelli is closer to the Greek. As mentioned above with regard to *Judean Antiquities* 1.13, Baldelli provides the correct reading for *Judean Antiquities* 1.337 "to see" ("*per veder il modo del vestire e*

gli ornamenti delle donne di quella regione,” ed. 1583, 50–51). This improved edition, however, did not find the same success as that of Pietro Lauro. Apparently, the audience was more interested in a handy book that could enhance its biblical knowledge, rather than in a philologically corrected edition.

27.5 Further Prohibitions

From the prohibition of 1559 in the Index of Paul IV mentioned above till the *Index Clementinus* of 1596, a relatively large space was given to the vulgarized texts that did not include the Bible. In the late 1590s, however, the *Observatio* of *Index Clementinus* to the abovementioned fourth rule (*Index* 1564) extended the prohibition to historical summaries and epitomes of the biblical books in every vulgar language, “and besides summaries, and also historical compendia of the same Bibles or of the books of the Holy Scripture, in whichever vernacular language they may be written” (De Bujanda et al. 1994, 929).

In this situation, the single inquisitors and bishops faced a dilemma in deciding what was allowed and what was not. For example, the bishop of Lucca, Alessandro Guidiccioni, in 1596 asked whether “Josephus on the War of the Jews, Landolfo on the Life of Jesus, the Humanity of the Son of God by Rafael Castrucci are to be included, as vulgarizations, in the Observation of the abovementioned 4th rule, in the words *and also historical summaries of the same Books*” (Fragnito 2005, 98–99). Likewise, inquiries were sent about Philo’s *Life of Moses* (Fragnito 1997, 291). In a letter dated August 3, 1596, the secretary of the Congregation of the Index, upon a request from the Duke of Urbino Francesco Maria II della Rovere, provided clarifications about the *Observatio*. He maintained that, among others “also the vulgarization of Josephus on the Antiquity is allowed” (Fragnito 2005, 109 n. 75).

Remarkably, Josephus’s own work is never mentioned in the *Index of Rome* among the prohibited books during the sixteenth century. The single prohibition concerning Josephus is dated to 1743, and refers to the edition of Josephus’s *excerpta* on the New Testament edited by Havercamp, and commented upon by Iohannes Baptista Ottius (Otte, 1741; De Bujanda and Richté 2002, 425). Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* were prohibited in the *Index* of Spain by Valdés 1559 (n. 516), of Portugal 1561 (n. 719), 1564 (n. 18), 1581 (n. 145), and again in Spain in the *Index* of Quiroga 1583 (n. 1805), according to the following statement, “Josephus on *Jewish Antiquities*, uniquely in Castillian (or in another vernacular language)”; the formulation in parentheses is only found in the *Index* of 1583. The Spanish Inquisition was stricter than the Italian one, and the reference to a prohibition of Josephus’s “*de Antiquitatibus*” can already be seen in a letter from the General Council of

the Inquisition to the inquisitors of Cuenca, dated 28 July, 1556 (De Bujanda et al. 1984, 90). One could suggest that the Inquisitor was mainly concerned with Josephus's 'rewritten Bible' and the *Judean War* was not included in the same censorial note, and the relevant issue was the vernacular language, not Josephus's work *per se*. In the prolegomenon to a later edition of Josephus's *Opera omnia* (Leipzig, Weidmann 1691), it is stated that some versions had been suspected of heresy ("*nonnullas etiam de haeresi suspectas*"). We might surmise that the Inquisitor must not have appreciated Josephus's invitation to his reader to think freely about some key biblical episodes, such as the miraculous parting of the Red Sea (*Ant.* 2.348).

27.6 Conclusion

From the second half of the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, Josephus's work continued to enjoy the success that it had found in Italy during the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. The great interest in his work is clear from the production of vernacular translations of *Judean War* as well of *Judean Antiquities*. In particular, the history of *Judean Antiquities* in Italian, from the first manuscript in the Ferrara household in 1472 to the first printed version by Pietro Lauro of Modena in 1544 and up to the final one by Baldelli for Giolito in 1581, highlights the connection between the translation of Josephus and the story of the vernacular Bible. If in the fifteenth century Josephus's text functions mainly as a *speculum principis*, in the sixteenth century the market seems to require and promote it as a companion to the Bible—a useful summary of the Old Testament and a historical background to the New Testament—as evident from the success of Pietro Lauro's translation. Even though the humanistic age initiated a new interest in ancient authors and their works, which was sometimes due to the vernacular translations—such as *Judean War* printed by Filippo di Giunta in 1512, or the Baldelli translation commissioned by Gabriele Giolito in 1575—the main attraction of Jewish Hellenistic texts such as the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philo, and Josephus was their connection to the Bible. For that reason, during the sixteenth century, in a time of widespread anti-Jewish sentiment, even though the Jews were banished from the papal state in 1569 under Pius V and the Talmud was burned in cities such as Rome, Venice (1553), and Cremona (1559) and prohibited by the *Index* of Rome in 1559, the destiny of the Jewish Hellenistic authors, and Josephus in particular, was different on the Italian peninsula due to the close connection with the Bible that had developed through the centuries. The translations of Josephus were not subjected to the same prohibitions as translations of the Bible during the Italian Renaissance; in fact, Josephus's text enjoyed a greater success in the second half of the sixteenth century.

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1451–1500: ms. Gar 15 (<http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/individual/MdBJ-G-32.xml>).

1493: *Incomincia il proemio di Iosepho Ebreo nel libro della historia della Guerra hebbono igiudei [sic: i giudei] coromani [sic: co' romani] ...* Florence, Bartholomeo Presbitero, *in folio*.

1512: *Iosepho de bello Iudaico in lingua toscana...* Florence, Filippo di Giunta, *in folio*.

1552: *Giosefo...contiene l'assedio, et ultima destruttione di Gierusalem, et tutto l'Regno de gli Hebrei... dal Greco, nell'idioma toscano tradotto: ultimamente con diligenza corretto et...migliorato*, Venice, Giovan Maria Bonello, *in octavo*.

1582: *Di Flavio Giuseppe della guerra de' giudei libri vii. libri due Contra Apione; e dell'Imperio della Ragione; tradotti nuovamente per M. Francesco Baldelli*, Venice, Gio. e Gio. Paolo Gioliti de' Ferrari 1582, *in quarto*.

Judean Antiquities

1472: ms. Est. Ital. 545 (α.O.3.4).

1544: *Giosefo de l'antichità giudaiche. Tradotto in italiano per M. Pietro*

Lauro Modenese, Venice, Vincenzo Vaugris, 1544, *in octavo*.

1581; rist.1583: *Di Flavio Giuseppe dell'antichità de' giudei libri xx. tradotti nuovamente per M. Francesco Baldelli. Dove s'ha piena notizia di quasi tutto il Testamento Vecchio; e di tutte l'histoire descritte da Mosè nel Genesi*, Venice, Gio. e Gio. Paolo Gioliti de' Ferrari, *in quarto*.

Opera omnia

1524: ΦΛ0039100392I0039F⊖ ΙΩ Σ ΗΠI0039F⊖ ... *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, Basel, Froben.

1534: *Flavii Iosephi Antiquitatum Iudaicarum... De bello iudaico... Contra Apionem... De imperio rationis sive de Machabeis...*, Basel, Froben.

FURTHER READING

For a general overview of the Italian Renaissance, focusing on relations between culture and society, the classic introduction remains Peter Burke's *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (2014). For an in-depth study of the dynamics of patronage within the different Italian courts, see Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth-century Italy* (1996). On the House of Este, and Duke Hercules in particular, see Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471–1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (1996). For Venice, a general introduction on the Venetian publishers and market, see Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (1979). On the effect of the Inquisition in Venice, see Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605* (1977). A general introduction to the Counter-Reformation can be found in N. S. Davidson, *The Counter-Reformation* (1987). On the prohibition of the vulgarizations of Scripture and related material in the Renaissance and the Early Modern Age, with a focus on Italy, see Gigliola Fragnito, *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (2001) and Fragnito (2005). An in-depth study of Josephus's reception history in the Italian Renaissance and Early Modern period requires a working knowledge of Italian and a mastery of Latin.

CHAPTER 28

A Note on English Translations of Josephus from Thomas Lodge to D. S. Margoliouth

Gohei Hata

28.1 Introduction

When one searches for an English translation of Josephus's works in a bookstore or online, the most common discovery is a single volume of the complete works by William Whiston. *Caveat emptor*, however. This English translation is remarkably old-fashioned and for good reason: Whiston lived from 1667 to 1752, employed as a Cambridge mathematician who participated in the most famous intellectual challenge of his day, which was *not* translating Josephus but determining a ship's longitude (Sobel 1995, 46–50). This Enlightenment polymath continues to introduce many first-time readers to the world of Josephus, but he was certainly not the only translator of Josephus's texts into English before the appearance of the Loeb Classical Library translations. This short note will shed light on other English translations, too, that paved the way to the little green volumes that provide so much help to scholars and students. When the Brill Josephus Project scholars complete their work, there will be a twenty-first-century version of the complete corpus that will inspire yet more scholarship.

28.2 Early Seventeenth- to Early Twentieth-Century English Translations

The first English translation of Josephus's writings based on the Latin text and French translation was made in 1602 by Thomas Lodge. He includes in the translation, as a work of Josephus, D. S. Erasmus's English translation of *The Rule of the Reason*, that is, *The Fourth Book of the Maccabees*. The first French translation of Josephus's works from the Greek text was made in 1667 by Arnauld D'Andilly, and in 1676 the so-called "revised and amended" edition of Lodge's translation, "according to the excellent French translation of Monsieur Arnauld D'Andilly," was published in London. This edition also includes Philo of Alexandria's *Embassy to the Emperor Gaius*. Strangely, the

name of the reviser is not mentioned anywhere in the book and there is no clear indication that this is an actual “revised and amended edition” of Lodge’s translation, since this translation is almost identical to Lodge’s original. Included in this edition are anti-Jewish statements in the form of advertisements. After briefly explaining the contents of each volume of *Jewish War*, the reviser says as follows:

It may be boldly affirmed, That never was seen a greater example thereof, than the ruine of that ungrateful Nation, of that proud City, and of that venerable Temple; since although the Romans were Masters of the World, and this Siege was the work of one of the greatest Princes they glory to have had for Emperors, the power of this victorious people, and the heroical valor of Titus, would have in vain undertaken this design, if God had not chosen them to the executioners of his justice. The blood of his Son shed, the most horrified of all crimes, was the only cause of the ruine of that unhappy City. The heavy hand of God upon that wretched people, caused that how terrible soever the War was that assaulted them without, it was yet much more dreadful within, by the cruelty of those unnatural Jews, who more like Devils than Man, destroyed by the Sword and Famine, of which they were the Authors, 1100000 persons; and reduced the remainder to that pass, that they could hope for no safety but from their Enemies, by casting themselves into the arms of the Romans. Such prodigious effects of vengeance for the death of the Son of God, might pass for incredible with those who have not the happiness to be enlightened with the light of the Gospel, if they were not related by a Man of that very same Nation, as considerable as Josephus was, for his Birth, for his quality of Priest, and for his Virtue. And methinks ‘tis visible, that God minding to make use of his testimony to authorize such important truths, preserved him by a miracle, when after taking of Josaphat, of forty which were recurred with him into a Cave, the Lot being cast so often to know who should be slain first, he only and one other remained alive.

The hostility towards the Jews is evidently derived from the theology of Eusebius (Hata 2007a; on Josephus and Patristic literature, see [Chapter 23](#) by Inowlocki in this volume). By using the text of Josephus in Books 2 and 3 of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius attempted to demonstrate that the Jewish people lost their temple and the city of Jerusalem because they refused to accept Jesus as their Savior. According to this reviser of Lodge’s work, the destruction of the temple in the year 70 C.E. occurred as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This strange logic is to be repeated in the English translations of Josephus.

Roger L’Estrange’s translation of Josephus’s writings appears in 1692 with the claim that the translation has been carefully revised and compared with the original Greek. However, no mention is made of the Greek text he used.

In 1699, a concise edition of Lodge's translation was published in London. In the preface to this edition, anti-Jewish remarks can be found, and these include those from the so-called revised edition of Lodge's translation.

H. Jackson's translation appeared in 1732 in London. Although this translation claims to have been "faithfully" made "from the original Greek," it does not mention which Greek text was employed. According to the list of the subscribers, 497 people purchased this edition, and among them were twenty-one Blackfriars. One year after this publication, John Court's translation "from the original Greek, according to Dr. Hudson's edition" was published in London. The advertisement is worth noting. It says:

The first English version of Josephus, was that done by Morisyn: 'tis of a very old standing, and its phrase is grown now almost obsolete, tho' in the main it comes as near the Greek, as any that have succeeded it.

Two other translators also mention the name of Morisyn as the one who made the first English version of Josephus (Schreckenberg 1979, 188). The advertisement justifies the publication of this new English translation based on "the Original, published ... by Doctor Hudson, Bodleian Library Keeper at Oxford." Besides the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* and Philo's *Embassy to the Jews* (not Gaius!), this translation contains Noldius's *History of Herod*.

The year 1737 is memorable for the English translation history of Josephus with the publication of William Whiston's translation, which is still widely read by a general audience today. The translation was made from the "original Greek, according to Havercamp's accurate edition." This translation includes Justus of Tiberias's *Chronology of the Kings of Judah*, but the *Fourth Book of the Maccabees* is not included.

Attached to his translation were Whiston's eight dissertations, which offered a passionate defense of Christianity. Whiston shares the same strong anti-Jewish sentiments with the reviser of Lodge's translation and these are clearly recognizable in his preface to *Jewish War* as well as in his footnotes. Whiston's translation of Josephus was almost immediately received with great respect and deemed to be the definitive, superior English translation and without errors. This positive response may have been due to the fact that Whiston succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge, though he was eventually expelled from there because of his *Sermons and Essays upon Several Subjects* (Farrell 1981, 30), and perhaps because he also defended the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, which was facing critical challenges at that time (on the reception history of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see [Chapter 22](#) by Whealey in this volume).

Whiston's translation did not dissuade others from competing, however. In 1740, James Wilson's edition of Josephus's works was published in London,

but it completely failed to attract an audience; in his preface, Wilson explains why he does not attach any commentary or dissertation to his edition. In 1777, the joint translation of Josephus by Ebenezer Thompson and William Charles Price was published. According to the list of subscribers, 836 people purchased this translation and among them were 42 clerks. The preface to this English translation presents strong anti-Jewish sentiments, referring to the Jewish people as “the most obstinate Disbelievers [in upper case].” In 1785, Charles Clarke’s translation appeared in London: “... 396 people purchased this translation, and among them were 16 clerks.” In 1789, G. H. Maynard’s translation, which included his ten dissertations, was published in London as well. One of the dissertations was on “A Continuation of the History of the Jews, from Josephus down to the present Time, including a period of more than 1700 Years.” The tone of this history was also anti-Jewish and Maynard explains the reasons that the Jewish nation was still permitted to survive, despite their failure to accept Jesus as Christ. In 1792, Thomas Bradshaw published his English translation, with “a continuation of History of the Jew.” This history seems to be identical in many places to Maynard’s edition.

Robert Traill’s English translation of *Jewish War and Life* was published in 1847 and 1851. Traill was the first to challenge the status of Whiston’s translation. He was deeply critical of the quality of Whiston’s translation as well as his approach to Josephus. Traill died during the Irish famine in 1846 without seeing the publication of his own translation of Josephus (Hata 2007b). Arthur Richard Shilleto continued this critical approach to Whiston’s translation, and in his publication in 1889–1890, based on Wilhelm Dindorf’s Greek text (1865), he drastically revised Whiston’s translation and deleted most of his footnotes since he deemed them irrelevant to Josephus’s text. David S. Margoliouth also, in his 1912 publication, on the basis of Benedikt Niese’s Greek text (Niese and Destinon 1885–1895), further revised Whiston’s translation.

28.3 Chronological list of English Translations of Josephus (up to the Loeb Classical Library)

1602	Thomas Lodge
1676	New edition of Lodge
1692	Roger L'Estrange
1699	Concise edition of Lodge
1732	H. Jackson
1737	William Whiston
1740	James Wilson

1777	Ebenezer Thompson and William Charles Price
1785	Charles Clarke
1789	George H. Maynard
1792	Thomas Bradshaw
1847 and 1851	Robert Traill
1889–1890	Arthur Richard Shilleto
1912	David S. Margoliouth

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FURTHER READING

Every student interested in the translation history of Josephus should consult the following:

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Schrekenberg, Heinz. 1979. *Bibliographie zu Flavius Iosephus*:

The Brill Josephus Project, edited by Steve Mason, so far includes the following volumes of English translation and commentary, in chronological order:

Feldman, Louis H. 2000. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 3: Judean Antiquities 1–4*, edited by Steve Mason. Leiden: Brill.

Mason, Steve. 2001. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 9: Life of Josephus*, edited by Steve Mason. Leiden: Brill.

Begg, Christopher T. 2005. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 4: Judean Antiquities 5–7*, edited by Steve Mason. Leiden: Brill.

Begg, Christopher T. and Paul Spilsbury. 2005. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 5: Judean Antiquities 8–10*, edited by Steve Mason. Leiden: Brill.

Barclay, John M. G. 2007. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 10: Against Apion*, edited by Steve Mason. Leiden: Brill.

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CHAPTER 29

From Masada to Jotapata: *On Josephus in Twentieth-Century Hebrew Scholarship*

Daniel R. Schwartz

29.1 Introduction

The third decade of the twentieth century was, as Abraham Schalit once noted (Schalit 1973, xii–xiii), a turning point in the attitude of scholars towards Josephus. That assessment referred to the fact that although the 1920s saw the publication of Hugo Willrich’s anti-Semitic monograph on the forgery of documents in Hellenistic-Jewish literature (Willrich 1924), in which Josephus figured prominently, a book that brought the hostile tendencies that had long characterized the attitude of scholars towards Josephus to a peak (or rather, a nadir), that decade also witnessed the appearance of the much more sympathetic books of Richard Laqueur (1920) and Henry St. John Thackeray (1929). Those works, along with a bevy of studies that focused on Josephus as a respectable witness to the Jewish religion of his day (Montgomery 1920/21; Guttmann 1928; Moore 1929; Foakes-Jackson 1930), marked the beginning of the end of the longstanding scholarly assumption that Josephus, both as an individual and an historian, was about as low and despicable as they come (Bilde 1988, 128–132); as Foakes-Jackson (1930, xvi) put it, although

[Josephus’s] character cannot command the admiration of any reader ... and though it is customary to disparage his abilities, the more one studies him, the more remarkable they appear to have been ... he should be carefully studied before he is condemned, or refused his place as the great historian of Judaism ...

One might have expected Hebrew scholarship on Josephus to undergo this same reorientation, for the main event of the decade was, without a doubt, the appearance of Jacob Naphtali Simchoni’s Hebrew translation of Josephus’s *Jewish War*. In his Introduction to that hefty volume, first published in Warsaw and Tel-Aviv in 1923, Simchoni, an historian (Shmueli 1986), complained bitterly that “most of those who have studied Josephus’s books up to our time tend to agree with his Galilean compatriots and, like them, view him as a coward and a traitor to his people ...” (Simchoni 1968 [1923], 13). Simchoni argues at length against that assessment, just as he also argued that

Jewish War is a first-rate work of historical literature, a position he stood by enthusiastically (Simchoni 1968 [1923], 20–25).

Expectations, and the lively reception of Simchoni's volume (testified to by numerous reprintings) notwithstanding, Josephus's image did not undergo a turnabout in Hebrew scholarship in the 1920s, nor even in the following decade. Simchoni's voice remained a lonely one and was even denounced by some (such as Alon 1977 [1938/39], 267–268 n. 45); denigration of Josephus, and rejection of him both as man and as historian, remained the norm until the late 1930s, as we shall see. Instead, the tenor of Hebrew scholarship on Josephus was governed in the 1920s far more by another work published around the same time: Isaac Lamdan's "Masada" (Yudkin 1971, 49–75, 200–234). This is a part-dramatic, part-epic poem, published in 1923–1924, that, although not without ambiguity (Feldman 2009), commemorated the bravery of the defenders of Masada and thereby lionized those whose course was the direct opposite of Josephus's, for if Josephus chose to avoid suicide at Jotapata and surrender to Romans, the defenders of Masada chose suicide rather than surrender to Rome. The poem was highly influential (Ben-Yehuda 1995, 220–224), and, whatever the ambiguities, "it seems that most readers focused on the optimistic chapters, which turned into texts for youth movements, tunes for songs and *hora* dances ... and ignored the serious doubts, that border on despair, in other lines and chapters" (Bitan 1990, 223–224). Simchoni's basic opinions, regarding Josephus as an individual in general, and regarding his *Jewish War* in particular, were to become widely accepted in Israel only some sixty years later, around the same time that, for various reasons, Israelis were developing second thoughts about Masada and its message. In this chapter, which is of necessity schematic, I will attempt to trace and explain this process.

29.2 Josephus the Traitor: *Life* and *Jewish War* in the 1930s

Anyone seeking a brief and emblematic sample of the attitude of Hebrew scholarship towards Josephus in the 1930s might do well to start with the tidbits in two successive footnotes of Menahem (Edmund) Stein's 1932/33 Hebrew translation of Josephus's *Life*. Both items relate to details in Josephus's report in *Life* concerning one of his wives. The first detail is Josephus's emphasis in *Life* 414 that it was at Vespasian's order that he married a woman who had been among the Romans' prisoners. Here Stein notes, as do various predecessors, that Josephus probably meant to relieve himself of responsibility for his violation of a rule of Jewish law, since—as Josephus himself notes several times (*Apion* 1.35; *Ant.* 3.276 and 13.292)—priests (*kohanim*), such as Josephus, were not allowed to marry former

captives. Before making that point, however, Stein—apparently alone among commentators of Josephus—thought it appropriate to offer another explanation for Josephus’s emphasis: Josephus wished to exonerate himself for “having turned his heart to marriage at a time of national trouble, and without giving any thought for his first wife, who remained in the besieged city of Jerusalem” (*War* 5.419) so he presented the marriage as if it had been forced upon him by Vespasian (Stein 1968, 177 n. 4). The second tidbit is Stein’s comment on Josephus’s report in *Life* 415 that this wife did not long remain with him: Stein comments that “it may be assumed that the woman was disgusted by the traitor and took the first opportunity to rid herself of him” (Stein 1968, 177 n. 5). It is obvious that Stein could take it for granted that his readers would not require any justification for his characterization of Josephus as a traitor whom any true Jew would naturally loathe.

Indeed the, label “traitor” appears frequently in Stein’s commentary (Stein 1968, 101, 123, 140, 145, etc.), alongside many other denunciations of Josephus’s morality; readers who began with his Introduction will have already been informed quite roundly, for example, that “Josephus’s deeds in the Galilee and his life thereafter are such as to outrage any honest man, anyone with a soul ...” (Stein 1968, 102). Stein’s opinion was quite representative of Jewish views in his day, and was based upon a detailed bill of indictment: Josephus had tried to persuade the people to avoid rebellion, that is to say, not to aspire to “freedom”; when he took upon himself the command of the Galilee and its organization in preparation for the war with Rome, he played a double game, since—so it was often asserted—he actually wanted to hand the region over to the Romans; by taking the Galilean governorship he prevented others, more qualified and more faithful to the Jewish cause, such as John of Giscala, from playing that role; at Jotapata, he promised his comrades-in-arms and subordinates to kill himself together with them, but once they fulfilled their part of the pact, he violated his and self-servingly turned himself over to the Romans; he ingratiated himself with his captors, kowtowed to them, befriended them, and collaborated with them during the war, serving them as guide, interrogator of prisoners, and propagandist calling upon his besieged countrymen to surrender. Then, after the war—so this indictment for treason continues—Josephus became Flavius Josephus and the Flavians’ mouthpiece, wrote his history of the war in return for a stipend and comfortable living accommodations provided by the emperor (while his brethren were humiliated and enslaved ...), and, accordingly, put his pen to work at delegitimizing those national heroes, who had fought for freedom, and to praising and glorifying Vespasian and Titus—who had defeated and humiliated the Jews and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. It is not hard to understand how, in a generation of Jewish state-building, and of nationalist rebellion against a western power that controlled the country, it would be popular to view Josephus as a figure who embodied everything that characterized traitors to the national cause.

As for Josephus's credentials as an historian: just as in an *obiter dictum* in his commentary to the *Life* 43, Stein comments that "Josephus reveals the truth only when he forgets (to hide it or to lie)" (Stein 1968, 116, n. 3), a year later he developed that point in an article on "The Silent and Forgetful Josephus" (reprinted in Stein 1937/38, 69–71 and Stein 1970, 56–57), in which he formulated it as a "methodological principle": except when he is forgetful or absentminded, Josephus deliberately omits details that could redound to the credit of the Jewish freedom-fighters.

Writings by Abraham Schalit, the main Israeli scholar of Josephus in the middle third of the twentieth century, provide other examples of this point of view in the 1930s (see Schwartz 1987, 10–11; 1995). First, in 1934—around the same time he referred in a German article to "typically Josephan misrepresentation" and to the way the *Life* affords us quite a shocking view of Josephus's moral inferiority (Schalit 1933, 83, 91)—Schalit published, in the journal of the Association of Hebrew Writers in Palestine, an article on Josephus's political-national views in *Jewish War* (Schalit 1934). The very fact that an article on this subject, including reference to scholarly works and citation of sources in Greek, was published in such a journal indicates the degree of popular interest in Josephus at the time; a decade after the appearance of Simchoni's translation of *Jewish War*; discussions of Josephus were of vital relevance. What is relevant here, however, is the fact that Schalit allowed himself, with no preparation or explanation in the foregoing discussion, to refer in the last lines of his article to Josephus's "degenerate character"—a move that, no less than Stein's explanation for the flight of Josephus's wife, confirms the picture of Josephus's image painted in the preceding paragraphs.

That this was, of course, part of broader trend in Hebrew historiography of the day was well illustrated, a few years later, by Schalit's 1936/37 monograph on Roman rule of Judaea (Schalit 1936/37). This volume is a bitter indictment of that regime, and by extension—although indirectly—of our main witness about it, who wrote about it with some sympathy or, at least, in a way that balanced its shortcomings by recounting the crimes of the Jewish rebels and terrorists who opposed it. As an example we may take the way Schalit dealt with the first two episodes of the regime of Ventidius Cumanus, the Roman governor of Judea ca. 50 C.E. According to Josephus, in both of his books (*War* 2.224–227; *Ant.* 20.105–112), the first episode broke out when a Roman soldier in the Temple of Jerusalem indecently exposed himself before a crowd of Jewish pilgrims, and the episode ended when, after numerous Jews who had protested against this fled at the sight of the Roman soldiers Cumanus called in, many of them died because, in their panic, they trampled one another while trying to flee through the narrow alleyways. Schalit, however, summarizes the episode quite differently: "The disorder was brought to an end by the terrible massacre perpetrated in the Temple court by Cumanus's

soldiers” (Schalit 1936/37, 86). In a footnote *ad locum*, all that Schalit adds are references to the two abovementioned passages in Josephus, although, in fact, neither of those reports says a word about Roman soldiers killing anyone. As for the second episode (*War* 2.228–231; *Ant.* 20.113–117): It began, according to Josephus, with some Jewish “bandits” waylaying and robbing an imperial slave, and it ended with Cumanus ordering the execution of a Roman soldier who destroyed a Torah scroll during a punitive action. In other words, this episode deals with Jewish terrorism, Roman enforcement of law and order, and—nonetheless—some demonstrative Roman sensitivity concerning Jewish *sancta*. Schalit, although his narrative is generally quite detailed, simply ignores this episode, skipping it entirely. Instead, he continues his report of Cumanus’s days only with the next (third) episode reported by Josephus (*War* 2.232–240; *Ant.* 20.118–124), in the course of which Cumanus’s soldiers killed many Jews (*War* 2.236, *Ant.* 20.122; Schalit 1936/37, 86). It seems, in other words, that Schalit thought that correcting or ignoring Josephus’s account was legitimate, even trivial; since it was only abject, groveling apologetics for the Romans, Josephus’s narrative could be corrected at will, or ignored, whenever it presents the Jews negatively or the Romans positively.

Another prominent and influential expression of the attitude that denounced Josephus as a traitor, and this time in a direct and blatant manner, was first published towards the end of the decade: Gedalyahu Alon’s (1938/39) “The Burning of the Temple” (English: Alon 1977). The article deals with the question of Titus’s responsibility for the burning of the Temple in light of Josephus’s claim in *Jewish War* (6.241, 254–266) that Titus objected to this course of action and tried to prevent it. Alon claims, based on various arguments, that Josephus lied here about Titus’s position; as Alon explained, at the end of his article, Titus of course wanted to destroy the Temple, but Josephus tried to exonerate Titus because, as someone who “had found refuge with them and ate at their table [he] was expected to tell future generations about the bravery and glory and kindness of his masters and benefactors.” This claim is of course accompanied by much denigration of Josephus—who employs “sweet talk and the slyness of a hypocrite,” whose style of writing corresponds to his “his servile and base spirit,” and who—in a phrasing that might owe its inspiration to Stein—let the truth through only via negligent slips of his pen. It is crucial to note that an important part of Alon’s argument was built upon texts found in rabbinic literature—texts that take it for granted that “the evil Titus” destroyed the Temple. Alon sees such texts as important testimony that cannot be denied. We will return to this point in [Section 29.4](#).

In concluding our discussion of the 1930s, we might refer to two articles by Joseph Klausner: one on Masada (1939) and one on two of the rebel leaders: John of Giscala and Simon Bar Giora (1942). These essays were published in a very popular compendium (eight editions between 1936 to 1952!) entitled

When a Nation Fights for Its Freedom (Klausner 1951), a work explicitly meant to strengthen the patriotism of Jewish youths and embolden them for the struggle for Israeli independence; as already the work's preface (signed 1939) unabashedly concludes, "This book therefore has, apart from its pure scientific purpose, one more goal: to reinforce the spirit and strengthen the hands of our sons in their difficult war for our land and in our land. And I wish to hope that the book will achieve that goal too" (Klausner 1951, xi). In order to serve that goal, Klausner naturally glorified the ancient rebels against Rome, those portrayed by Josephus (the main and virtually only source) in a very negative way, and so Josephus simply had to come out very badly in this so very popular volume. Thus, for example:

What Josephus thought and what Josephus did were two different things. It is impossible to know, what he truly intended. And this flighty youth is also to be suspected of treason ... For John [of Giscala] and Josephus were opposites. John was a fiery patriot and man of action, with a strong will – a man capable of sacrificing himself and others on the altar of the state's freedom ... and Josephus was the opposite: a man of literature and of art, a man of doubles and of halves, lacking anything fixed and all practical ability.

(Klausner 1951, 177)

Such an attitude toward Josephus was quite natural in the years of Zionist struggle for the foundation of a sovereign Jewish state, a struggle that, just as in Josephus's days, strove to throw out the western power that was occupying the country.

29.3 From the 1930s to the 1940s: The Rise of *Jewish Antiquities*, and of Josephus Himself

In [Section 29.2](#), on the 1930s, we focused upon two of Josephus's books: *Jewish War* and *Life*. There were two reasons for this: both were accessible in Hebrew in the 1930s, thanks to translations by Simchoni and Stein (respectively), and both deal with the rebellion of 66–73 C.E. That was the historical episode in which Josephus himself was an actor, and which provided all of the fuel for the widespread denunciation of Josephus as an individual.

Nevertheless, already in the 1930s there were voices that called for a more positive evaluation of Josephus. There were two routes to such a reevaluation. One, relatively minor, grew out of the same issues, for just as there was room for debate between moderates and zealots concerning the British, so too could there be debate about Josephus; at least it might be recognized that he need

not be viewed merely as a self-serving traitor. Rather, he could be considered a realist, as someone with a consistent political stance and, indeed, a respectable precedent: Josephus could be viewed as the Jeremiah of the Second Temple period. This comparison goes back at least as far as Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden*, but Graetz had used it, most emphatically and at a most salient point of his narrative—the very last page of his volume on the Second Temple period!—to condemn Josephus, contrasting his life of luxury in Rome after the destruction of the Second Temple to Jeremiah's mourning among the ruins of Jerusalem after the destruction of the First Temple (Graetz 1856, 457). In contrast, Simchoni had made the same comparison in a positive way in his 1923 Introduction to his translation of *War* (Simchoni 1968 [1923], 14), characterizing Josephus's *Jewish War* as a "lamentation," and even Schalit picked up on it as well, in his 1934 Moznaim article, in which he develops, at some length, the comparison between Josephus's writings and those of the biblical prophets. True, in that article, Schalit concluded his discussion, as noted above, with a routine reference to Josephus's "degenerate character." Now, however, we must observe that that assessment served only as an opening springboard for a peroration that concluded the essay with a very different attitude:

Despite his degenerate character Josephus loved his people truly and was worried about its future. And out of worry and anxiety for the fate of the nation he arrived at a conclusion and advised that it be accepted: Josephus was the first Jew who made the conscious decision to cast his lot with the western Diaspora, and he is also the father of the philosophy of the Diaspora and its founder.

(Schalit 1934, 305)

However, in a generation of national struggle in Palestine, and on the eve of the Holocaust in the Diaspora, such a generous interpretation of Josephus was not easily accepted. Alon's angry rejection of Simchoni's positive comparison of Josephus to Jeremiah (Alon 1977 [1938/39], 267–268, n. 45) seems far more representative of Josephus's image at the time. Improvement of it would come only via another route: the abandonment of the focus on *Jewish War* and *Life* and the First Revolt, and the broadening of interest in Josephus to his other two books and earlier periods, in which Josephus himself and his actions during the First Revolt were not at the center of the story.

As a harbinger of this new direction, we may point to an obscure article by Stein, published in a Warsaw journal in 1929, a few years before the appearance of his translation of the *Life* (Stein 1928/29). The article deals with Josephus's methods of description, and in the context of his discussion of Josephus's speeches, Stein makes the following comment concerning Herod's speech to his soldiers during his war with the Arabs (*War* 1.379):

It should be mentioned that this speech also appears in the *Antiquities*

(15.127), but in a different form. When we compare the two to each other it is easy to see in which direction speeches in Josephus develop. The speech in *War* reeks of Sophist oratory that is full of slyness and tries to turn white into black and black into white, while *Antiquities* already displays the moderation that eschews the rhetorical trickery of crafty Sophists and provides reasonable argumentation in its stead.

(Stein 1928/29, 5)

This passage illustrates very well how *Jewish Antiquities* could function as a foil, emphasizing, by way of contrast, all that was wrong with *Jewish War*. True, Stein does stress that, even with regard to *Jewish Antiquities*, one should not look in Josephus for truth, but rather for art (Stein 1928/29, 14). But he does so in quite a positive way, emphasizing that Josephus adhered to the standards of historiography of his day.

Two years later, Hebrew scholarship made another step in the same direction, insofar as Josephus's status is concerned, with the publication of the first edition of Victor A. Tcherikover's Hebrew volume on Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews (1931). Josephus's writings supply a good part of the material upon which the book is based, and whoever reads the book will infer that Josephus is a very useful source, often very reliable. Note, in this connection, that the main Josephan work Tcherikover used was *Jewish Antiquities*, not *Jewish War*; although he did not always accept *Jewish Antiquities* as reliable, he nevertheless used it as one of the main building blocks of his story. As for *Jewish War*, the opposite was the case: already, in 1926, Tcherikover had published a separate Hebrew article dedicated to the thesis that the opening of the narrative of Josephus's *Jewish War*, which describes the opposing parties in Jerusalem at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes' ascent to the throne, is totally confused and unworthy of credence (Tcherikover 1925/26, summarized in Tcherikover 1959, 392–395). But even here, Tcherikover's position is not damning; he does not claim that Josephus was lying in order to serve some pro-Roman agenda or any other one, but rather that he was confused. That is, *Jewish Antiquities* is quite a respectable and useful historical source, and *Jewish War*—whether or not one cares to condemn Josephus for his role in the First Revolt—is also not beyond the pale for the historian.

A study with a much more restricted scope, but claiming—and so fostering—the same point of view, was published at the very end of the 1930s: Schalit's discussion of Josephus's use, in *Jewish War* 1.121, in connection with Hyrcanus II, of the term “king's brother” (Schalit 1938/39). Is this a term with any special meaning? And should Josephus's statement, that this was Hyrcanus II's title and position, alongside of his brother who was the real king, be accepted? Or should we prefer the plain statement of *Jewish Antiquities* 14.6 that Hyrcanus resigned completely from public life? Schalit concludes that “the king's brother” is indeed a formal title (something like

“deputy king”), but that *Jewish War*’s testimony, that it was given to Hyrcanus, must be rejected. However, just as with Tcherikover’s rejection of *Jewish War* 1.31–33, this does not derive from any moral argument. Moreover, most of the article is devoted to an in-depth discussion of the first question (What does the term used by *Jewish War* mean?), a discussion that is based upon a comparative study of other ancient Greek evidence. That is, even *Jewish War* can be discussed calmly and seriously as an historical source, alongside others, so long as the discussion does not deal with Josephus himself or with the period of the First Revolt. Moreover, if Schalit’s article concludes that Josephus’s testimony in *Jewish War* is to be rejected, it adopts that of *Jewish Antiquities* in its stead, so Josephus himself is not impugned.

Schalit’s general approach in this article was based on various studies by Elias Bickerman, which put Josephus’s writings into their Hellenistic context, such as the two (Bickerman 1935 and 1937) that Schalit held to be so important that he eventually included them in his anthology representing the “ways of scholarship” concerning Josephus (Schalit 1973). More specifically, however, Schalit’s study of royal deputies built upon an article by Hans Volkmann, another great contemporary scholar of the Hellenistic world (Volkmann 1937). Here too, we see that once it prescinded from the context of Josephus’s own lifetime and career, Hebrew scholarship could integrate the study of Josephus into the world of general scholarship, and—even concerning *Jewish War*!—extricate Josephus from the narrow perspectives imposed by Zionist polemic.

The very end of the 1930s saw the appearance of two more studies that joined this growing chorus of positively-oriented Josephan scholarship focusing on *Jewish Antiquities*, published in Tarbiz and Zion, the two foremost academic journals in Hebrew. Isaak Heinemann, in an article reminiscent of Stein’s 1929 study, addressed the biblical part of *Antiquities of the Jews* and, building to some extent on work by Martin Braun on Hellenistic novelistic writing (1934, 1938), presented Josephus’s method of rewriting the Bible in a favorable manner (Heinemann 1939/40); Joshua Gutmann’s study of Josephus’s account of Alexander the Great, at the end of *Jewish Antiquities* 11, concluded that it is based in part on good sources and in part on a source that that was interested in glorifying the Jews (Gutmann (1939/40, 290). That is, even when *Jewish Antiquities* deviates from the historical truth, it does so in a good cause. One way or another, the image and the upshot are very different from those of studies that focused on Josephus’s *Jewish War* or *Life*.

This new approach, which presented Josephus in a more favorable manner the further one got from his own lifetime and from the Great Revolt, and especially the further one got from his *Jewish War* and *Life*, was given a very serious boost in the 1940s, with the publication of two Hebrew translations of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* by Alexander Schorr (*Antiquities* 1–8 in two volumes, 1940 and 1946) and by Abraham Schalit (*Antiquities* 1–10 in two

volumes, 1944). These learned volumes, and especially Schalit's annotated translation, which gained success, wide circulation, and additional printings (and which he completed with a 1963 translation of the latter half of *Jewish Antiquities*, but unfortunately without any notes), presented to the public a different Josephus, one that was almost unknown. This was a Josephus, who quite evidently loved the Bible (Josephus's main and almost exclusive source for the first half of *Jewish Antiquities*) and defended the heroes of his nation—in the biblical past as well as in the days of the Second Temple—and who thereby functioned as an advocate and apologist for his people in his own day as well. Already in 1941, in light of the publication of Schorr's translation, Armand Kaminka began to sing the praises of this new Josephus, using formulations that even only a few years later no one could have imagined appearing in Hebrew (Kaminka 1940/41, 77–78), following up two years later with this amazing encomium:

Despite his moral failings and departures from the truth in his memories concerning his youth, we must bow our head in respect to this great man. Since the days of the prophets no one else ever arose who so extolled and praised and reinforced the spirit of the Jewish people. It was only due to their groundless grievances, and to uncritical accusations made against him by his readers (and, unfortunately, by historians as well), that they failed to recognize properly his outstanding virtues, his greatness, and his praise—which will forever endure.

(Kaminka 1943/44, 79)

Schalit's own praise for Josephus, that same year, is somewhat more restrained, but much more prominently located, towards the end of his long Introduction to *Jewish Antiquities*:

[Josephus develops] the concept of the God of Israel and the religion of Israel as he understands them. Josephus does not admit the superiority of Greek religion. On the contrary, he thinks it is inferior to Judaism's notion of God ... [Josephus's] attempts to shut the mouths of the accusers of the Jewish people are made clear ... Josephus's anxiety about the future of the masses of Jews in the Diaspora ... *Antiquities* is the first work composed after the destruction of the Second Temple that envisions the future of the Jewish people in the West as a positive political program, and Josephus was its author ... Nowadays [in the middle of the Holocaust – D.R.S], about nineteen hundred years later, we know that Josephus's plan was based on an illusion. *But we must not accuse him of "treason" and of having abandoned his people.* Josephus lived and fought among his people according to his own way. Many have walked the same road and failed up to these days.

(Schalit 1943/44, lxxix–lxxxii, my emphasis)

Here we can clearly see how the focus upon *Jewish Antiquities* redeems

Josephus and vindicates him. For Schalit, this development is especially salient, for although as noted there are some early signs of such an improvement in his 1934 article in *Moznaim* (there it came along, as we saw, with a focus on *Jewish War* and with the routine generalization about Josephus's degenerate character), after all his work on *Jewish Antiquities*, Schalit now, a decade later, silently consigned that earlier article to oblivion. Namely, twice in the course of his Introduction to *Jewish Antiquities*, he refers his readers to a forthcoming German essay on Josephus's national-political views (Schalit 1943/44, xxiii n. 35, and lxxxi n. 107), omitting all reference to the fact that he had already published, in Hebrew, an article on that very topic. Schalit's German article was never published. The fact that Schalit chose to refer Hebrew readers to a not-yet-published German article and totally ignored the existence of a Hebrew one, just as he later omitted the latter from the list of publications he submitted to the Hebrew University in support of his application for an academic appointment (as I discovered in his file in the HU archives), shows how conscious he was that his views had changed.

But although Schalit's German article never appeared, for whatever reason, when the time for something has come, it comes. A few years later Azriel Shohet published a Hebrew article that moves along similar lines, and even further, making Josephus into something of a Zionist ("Josephus did not despair of the Land of Israel, and in all of his being he remained within it") who retained his people's national values and hopes, including the restoration of the Jewish state in the Land of Israel (Shohet 1953). Shohet's study is especially interesting insofar as it is framed as an argument against Schalit's interpretation of Josephus as seeing the Jews' future only in the Diaspora. But what they had in common, namely a positive recognition of Josephus's faith in the continued history of the Jewish people, and a concomitant positive view of Josephus himself, is more important in the present context.

In sum, studies focusing upon the *Jewish Antiquities*, and then the appearance of translations of that work, contributed directly to the improvement of Josephus's moral image in Hebrew eyes. Of course, things did not change overnight, and there were opposing voices, such as Urbach's protest against Kaminka and support for Alon (Urbach 1942/43) and Churgin's old-style blanket condemnation of Josephus (Churgin 1949/50); in his autobiography, Jacob Katz recalled that, in the late 1940s, he was attacked by a "Zealot for Zionist education" for having written, in a Hebrew textbook, that as an historian Josephus had atoned for his sins as a soldier (Katz 1995, 131–132). Nevertheless, things were changing. The scholars who made that happen did so, first of all, by focusing attention upon interesting materials that did not relate to Josephus's personal record during the First Revolt. But they also did it indirectly, insofar as both translators of *Jewish Antiquities*, and especially Schalit, exerted great effort, with the help of rich *Vorarbeiten* (Rappaport 1930; Ginzberg 1909–1938), to link and compare Josephus's work in the first

half of *Jewish Antiquities* to the Jewish tradition (Septuagint, Targum, midrash, etc.). These scholars thereby promulgated the notion that Josephus was, after all, worthy of a place on the Jewish “bookshelf.” Thus, from all points of view, the 1940s were the decade of *Jewish Antiquities* and of an improvement of Josephus’s own image. If above we noted that the decade began with very positive studies by Heinemann and Gutmann about *Jewish Antiquities*, we may now note that the decade ended with an article by Schalit on a different aspect of the same episode that Gutmann had addressed—and this study also (Schalit 1949a) treats *Jewish Antiquities* as a very respectable historical source worthy of our time and our trust.

29.4 The 1950s and 1960s: Josephus in the Light of Qumran, the Holocaust, and the Excavations of Masada

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed further improvement in Josephus’s stature in Hebrew scholarship, and one can point to four reasons for this. First of all, the positive impact of the rise of *Jewish Antiquities* in the 1940s had to lead more generally to an upgrading of Josephus’s image. For, to the extent it was now recognized, on the basis of Josephus’s writings from the last decade of the first century, that he was a loyal spokesman of the Jewish people and well rooted in its traditions, it became difficult to maintain the belief that he had been so different only twenty years earlier, when he wrote *Jewish War* (and also, according to the prevalent theory expressed by Stein as others, at the time when he wrote the bulk of his *Life* as well, Stein 1968, 94). For examples of how such an appreciation of *Jewish Antiquities* entailed a revision of the earlier condemnatory attitude toward *Jewish War*, note Schalit’s planned German article mentioned above and his very sympathetic essay about Josephus’s *Jewish War*, published in a popular Hebrew periodical, in which he basically espouses Simchoni’s presentation of Josephus as a lamenter:

In this work Josephus is revealed as the tragic Jew ... this does not mean that he denied his people or described the destruction of his homeland as if it were an event of no concern to him ... in passages such as this the Jewish historian becomes a lamenter, whose soul was linked to that of the ancient biblical lamenters ... as all great works, the *War* has something that hovers above all times and is appropriate to all of them. The book testifies to the suffering of its author’s soul and his inner struggle. It is a worthy monument not only to the times it describes, but also to the man who produced it out of the confusion and convolution of his soul.

(Schalit 1949b)

However, the improvement of Josephus’s image in the 1950s and 1960s was

mainly due to three other reasons: Qumran, the Holocaust, and the Masada excavations. The impact of Qumran was direct, since the Dead Sea Scrolls that were first discovered on the eve of the Israeli War of Independence and continued to appear throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, began to be published and bolstered Josephus's credibility in several ways. First of all, they provided new evidence, authentic, and in Hebrew, for topics about which Josephus wrote. This applied, first and foremost, to Josephus's reports about the Essenes: the Scrolls were usually taken to confirm Josephus's reliability about that ancient sect. Thus, for example, already in 1953, Jehoshua Grintz published in *Sinai*, the main scholarly periodical of the religious-Zionist movement, an article that, using tables of parallel texts, compared excerpts from Josephus's *Jewish War* to texts from Qumran in order to demonstrate that the sect that produced the Scrolls was the Essenes (Grintz 1952/53). Note well: if in the 1930s Josephus, and especially his *Jewish War*, had been anathema for such a periodical as *Sinai*, now—in accordance with the new trend—Josephus and even *Jewish War* could be rehabilitated, as it were, by association with old-new Hebrew texts; note that Shohet's 1953 article that vindicates Josephus as a Zionist was published by the same religious Zionist house. The Scrolls—Hebrew documents appearing out of the soil of Palestine just as Israeli independence was being proclaimed!—were readily usable as evidence for Zionist claims about the legitimacy of Jewish claims to Palestine (see the beginning and end of Schwartz Nardi 1965), and, if to be made meaningful, they needed clarification and context from Josephus, it was difficult to go on condemning and shunning him.

Apart from Josephus's role in identifying the sect of the Scrolls as Essene, the Scrolls made his writings useful in many other contexts as well. Thus, for example, references in Qumran *pesharim* to “the Wicked Priest” or “the House of Absalom” engendered endless study of Josephus's references to possible candidates (see Yizhar 1967). Moreover, the Scrolls positively rehabilitated Josephus concerning one very sensitive point: his report in *Jewish Antiquities* 13.380 that, at the time of Alexander Jannaeus's war against Demetrius III (ca. 88 B.C.E.), the Jewish king crucified hundreds of his Jewish enemies, while their wives and children were butchered in front of their eyes, and at the same time he sat to eat with his concubines and enjoyed the show. The description is quite ghastly. And it also used to be quite unbelievable, especially for Jews, who in general did not want to believe that a Jewish king could behave this way to Jewish subjects, and in particular because rabbinic tradition did not include crucifixion among the four legal modes of executions of the court and even claimed it was a mode of execution “like the kingdom does” (*Sifrei Deuteronomy* §221, ed. Finkelstein, 254). That is, crucifixion was something that Romans did, not Jews—a claim that was very important for Jews in their debates with Christians about who killed Jesus. Thus, Josephus's report had him maligning a Jewish king and playing into the hands of anti-Semites who would condemn the Jews as Christ-killers,

and so it was usual for Jews, who anyway found it easy to condemn Josephus, to claim that (1) the report was untrue; and (2) that Josephus had uncritically or nastily taken it over from a hostile source, probably Nicolas of Damascus, Herod's court historian (see, for example, Klausner 1951, 108). But in 1956 there was published a fragment of *Pesher Nahum* that referred to "The Lion of Wrath" who "hung men alive" in the days of "Demetrius, King of Greece, who sought" (as Josephus says in the same context in *Jewish Antiquities* 13) "to enter Jerusalem" (Allegro 1956). It is very clear the *pesher* is referring to the same episode and corroborates Josephus's nasty story about the way the Hasmonean king avenged himself upon his Jewish enemies. Thus, the Qumran discoveries bolstered Josephus's credibility, and so it is no wonder that when one of the grand old men of Israeli historiography tried to maintain, even in the 1960s and 1970s, the good old tried and true hatred of Josephus with which he had grown up (Baer 1970/71), it came along with a rejection of the reliability (and early dating) of the Scrolls as well (Baer 1963/64, and especially Baer 1968/69, 39–42); for the continuation of this attitude toward Josephus and dating of the Scrolls into the next generation, see Efron (1980, 10; 68 n. 72; and 141–148).

The Holocaust improved Josephus's image in two ways. First, it led Schalit to conclude that power and evil can indeed prevail in this world, and that wise people should acknowledge this (Schwartz 1987, 1995). Schalit applied the attitude especially toward reconstructing Herod as a realist who, by accepting Roman rule, achieved what was possible, as opposed to nationalist idealists who rejected Rome and succeeded only in bringing on a catastrophe, which he actually terms a *shoa* (see especially Schalit 1960, 24). Thus, Schalit's Herod of 1960 was like Schalit's Josephus, as he had come to be since the 1940s. But Herod's stance was like Josephus's. Although when Schalit first published his monograph about Herod, it elicited much criticism (see Schwartz 1987, 12), to the point of accusing him of justifying murder and "abominable Machiavellianism" (Kressel 1961/62), the point of view he posited about that ruler would become quite prevalent two decades later, as we shall see—and Josephus's attitude toward Rome was much the same as Herod's.

Another effect of the Holocaust was indirect but broader, and there is also an irony to it insofar as it closes a certain circle. As we have seen, scholarship on Josephus in the 1930s focused on *Jewish War and Life* and, accordingly, on the Great Revolt, with Zionist writers naturally focusing on Josephus's "treasonous" role in that episode and the contrast between him and other figures who were more worthy of respect from a Zionist point of view, such as John of Giscala or the defenders of Masada. The improvement of his image in the 1940s was, in large measure, a result of a refocusing of attention on earlier periods and on the book, *Antiquities of the Jews*. What next happened, however, constituted a return to the time of the First Revolt, but Josephus

played a positive role in it simply because, as with the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, his writings are our main source. Namely, the 1950s and the 1960s saw growing interest around the world in the study of “the Zealots” (as they were usually called), the Jews who rebelled against Rome in the first century. This research was not born out of Zionist considerations but rather out of a certain trend in Christian thought in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Schwartz 1992, 128–146).

To understand this, we must realize that many Christian scholars found themselves, in the wake of the Holocaust, between the rock of guilty conscience, in light of the fact that numerous good Christians and churches had collaborated with the Nazis or at the very least failed to oppose them, and the hard place of Paul’s warning in the Epistle to the Romans (13:1) that “There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him.” One way of dealing with this problem was by positing that—whatever one thinks about Romans 13—it must be legitimate for Christians to oppose a wicked government because Jesus, too, had done so.

This was, to a large extent, the origin of a huge body of scholarship; it began with Oscar Cullmann’s *The State in the New Testament* (1956) and, after blooming into monographs on “the Zealots” by William R. Farmer (1956) and Martin Hengel (1961), went on to spawn a flood of books on the trial and death of Jesus, all of which focused on the theme of his having been a rebel against Rome. The trend peaked in 1967–1968, with Samuel G. F. Brandon’s works on *Jesus and the Zealots* and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*. Obviously Josephus, especially in his book *Jewish War*, is featured on every page of these books.

This world-wide interest in first-century rebels against Rome was well reflected in Hebrew scholarship as well. Thus, for some examples, as early as 1958, just as Hengel was completing his *Die Zeloten*, Cecil Roth’s *The Historical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls* appeared in Hebrew translation; in 1962, Menahem Stern lectured on “Leadership in the Groups of Freedom-Fighters at the End of the Second Temple Period” at a conference of the Israel Historical Society (Stern 1991, 300–308); following all the attention to Masada in the 1960s (see below), in 1976, the first issue of *Cathedra*, a soon-to-be prominent Israeli historical journal, included a symposium on “The Zealots at the End of the Second Temple Period as a Historiographical Problem” (republished in Kasher 1983, 367–388); in 1983, the Israeli Historical Society published a Hebrew anthology on the First Revolt (Kasher 1983) that included translations of numerous pieces of Christian scholarship on “the Zealots,” and that same year a multi-volume Hebrew series on Jewish history published two volumes that dealt with the Second Temple period, of which the one on “Society and Religion” included an essay by Stern on “Sicarii and Zealots” (Stern 1983) and the other was devoted in its entirety to the Jewish revolts against Rome (Rappaport 1983). In all these Hebrew

works, too, Josephus is a star witness. Here, then, is the irony mentioned above: if to begin with a focus on *Jewish War* (and *Life*) engendered condemnation of Josephus, the renewed interest in first-century rebels, by scholars who, by and large, had little invested in Josephus himself and were more interested in the light his writings could shed on someone else, Jesus, resulted in a haphazard improvement in the image of Josephus himself.

The third very important factor that contributed to Josephus's image in the 1950s and 1960s was the excavation of Masada, begun by Shemarya Gutmann in the 1950s and especially brought to a peak, and to a high public profile, by Yigael Yadin in the 1960s. These excavations fanned public interest in the ancient rebels, paralleling and reinforcing the Christian interest described above. Moreover, since the excavations basically confirmed the reliability of Josephus's testimony concerning the topography of Masada and the way the siege was conducted (Broshi 1982), it was all the easier for a generation interested in finding ancient models for Zionist heroes to accept the credibility of Josephus's entire story about Masada, including the story of the mass suicide; the chapter on "The Dramatic End" in Yadin's popular 1966 volume on Masada consists of a verbatim replication of Whiston's translation of *Jewish War* 7.320–406. While later scholars might complain about Yadin having gone too far (Ben-Yehuda 2002), his spectacular finds at Masada, and his energetic and enthusiastic dissemination and presentation of them, contributed greatly to Josephus's stature.

Thus, what scholarship of the 1950s and the 1960s showed, both to Christians looking for ancient models of opponents to a tyrannical government and to Jews looking for ancient models of Zionist rebels against a foreign power, is that the work cannot be done unless one is willing to take seriously, and often to believe, the main source that survives concerning such first-century rebels. When taken along with Schalit's conclusion from the Holocaust, that the good guys don't always win and so it might be prudent for them to avoid conflict or to surrender when outnumbered and outgunned, it was all the more difficult to leave Josephus a pariah.

29.5 The 1970s and 1980s: Completing the Rehabilitation and Lowering Expectations

It seems that three trends that were prevalent during the 1970s and 1980s more or less completed this rehabilitation of Josephus's image. The first was a general trend in the Israeli atmosphere, the second was a general trend in the study of ancient historiography, and the third was specific to the study of Josephus in particular.

First, as a result of the Yom-Kippur War (1973) and the wallowing in what

was generally termed the “Lebanese mud” in the early 1980s, the atmosphere in Israel in general, and the attitude toward war, changed greatly. The euphoria that had accompanied the Israeli victory in the Six Day War in 1967, and the conviction that the few could always prevail against the many, all but disappeared, making way for a more sober and less sanguine atmosphere (see Neusner 1973/74 and Bar-Kokhva 1985); such an atmosphere had to improve Israeli attitudes toward a first-century Jew who thought it a mistake to fight a war that could not be won because the other side was stronger. What Schalit wrote in German already in 1973, that “the problematic of Jewish existence in the Roman Empire was far more complex than what people used to tend to assume, and therefore Josephus cannot simply be judged as a traitor to his people” (Schalit 1973, xviii), would become common in Hebrew by the 1980s. Thus, to take a prominent example, David Flusser included in his short 1986 book on Josephus—based on lectures on Israeli Army Radio, of all places!—a chapter that was dedicated to the question “Whom Did Josephus Betray?”, and he answers, “In my opinion, he cannot be viewed as a traitor” and concludes the chapter with the statement that “Josephus Flavius (*sic*) was a many-sided individual [but], in my opinion, the fact that he was captured by the Romans does not amount to treason” (Flusser 1985, 19–20). That assessment came not long after Uriel Rappaport, who had written his doctoral thesis under Schalit’s supervision, called for a more humane and sympathetic attitude toward Josephus, one that interprets him as a person who believed in lofty ideals but simply lacked the ability to realize them (Rappaport 1976/77). This was all part and parcel of broader developments of the same nature, as can easily be seen regarding scholarly attitudes toward ancient Judean rebellions:

- *Concerning the Hasmonean Revolt*, enshrined in Jewish liturgy and in Jewish popular memory as the holiday that teaches that the righteous few can and will defeat the evil many: these were the years in which Bezalel Bar-Kokhva developed and published, in Hebrew, his thesis that the wars of Judas Maccabaeus do not teach that lesson because the Jews were not so few, the Syrians were not so many, and the Jews did not so much win as hold out longer. Bar-Kokhva has pointed out that his thesis was very unpopular in Israel prior to the Yom Kippur War, but thereafter it became very popular (Bar-Kokhva 1985).
- *Concerning the First Revolt*: these were the years in which Israeli youth movements lost their traditional interest in Masada and what it represents (Ben-Yehuda 1995, 90–94, 102–103); the years in which a history teacher could publish praise for Josephus, denouncing anti-Roman rebels and any attempt to use hero-myths to manipulate children (Erelli 1983/84, 183–184); the years in which—after decades of memorializing the last defenders of Masada as if they had fought Rome and thereby served as models encouraging modern Israelis not to

give up the good fight, thus representing a situation very different from that of Jews in the Holocaust—Israelis began to think of them more and more as suicidal escapist whose situation was indeed similar to that of Jews in the Holocaust (Feldman 2009); and these were the years that saw, more generally, the emergence of the debate concerning the folly of ancient Jewish rebellions, upon which we shall focus in the next paragraph.

- *Concerning the Bar-Kokhba revolt*: these were the years in which Menahem Mor developed his 1984 doctoral thesis that argued that the rebellion was of only of a limited scope (Mor 1991), and these were the years in which Yehoshafat Harkabi's works in praise of political realism attained widespread resonance (Harkabi 1983 [1982]). Mor's monograph contradicted standard Zionist historiography on many points, and, in explicit agreement with Schalit on Josephus (Mor 1991, 245–249), rejected its idolizing of rebelliousness against greater powers. Similarly, Harkabi's works, which focused on the First Revolt and especially on Bar-Kochba's, cast the defeatists of ancient Jewish history (from Jeremiah to Johanan ben Zakkai) as the good guys in contrast to the rebels who, in clinging to nationalist values, brought on catastrophe—and Josephus, who condemned the rebels and accepted Roman rule, came out on the good guys' side, with Harkabi relying, predictably, upon Schalit (Harkabi 1983, 17). These works naturally elicited a good deal of debate in the 1980s (Zerubavel 2003, esp. 291–294), but in general pointed to a major trend. The fact that Barbara Tuchman's *March of Folly* appeared in Hebrew in 1986, shortly after this debate began, is another straw in the same wind.

The second trend upon which I would focus here is related to the general move in the study of ancient historiography that puts a question mark alongside the expectation that historians tell the truth, “wie es eigentlich gewesen.” And if in the 1970s there were still those who saw untruthfulness as a reason to condemn Josephus (such as Baer 1970/71), the new trend has its implications for Josephus, too. That is because the more this trend developed, the less weighty such criticism would be, for if a historian is first and foremost a creative writer, then that is how his or her writings must be read. True, concerning Josephus this trend has yet to become widespread in Hebrew scholarship, but it has become very prominent place in Hebrew scholarship (as in scholarship in other languages) concerning rabbinic literature—and that, willy nilly, has its implications for Josephus, too. That is because, as we saw in the case of Alon's article about the burning of the temple (Alon 1977), rabbinic literature used to be an important antithesis to the writings of Josephus; when rabbinic literature contradicted Josephus, it used to be easy to accept the former and reject the latter. However, in Hebrew scholarship as elsewhere, the 1960s to the 1980s saw the decline of the presumption that

rabbinic literature was a reliable historic source, a trend that was accompanied by a rise in interest in rabbinic literature (including its seemingly historical parts) as literature (see Kalmin 1994), and such a revision of the way ancient sources should be read, by readers of Hebrew, had to have its implications for Josephus, too. Moreover, since the new attitude toward rabbinic literature entailed assigning it to the later periods in which it was edited, as opposed to the earlier traditional assumption that it was timeless oral tradition, more or less immutably transmitted from earlier generations, Josephus was left very alone as witness to the Second Temple period. It therefore became even more difficult to condemn him and scorn his testimony—for without it, upon what would we base our knowledge of that period?

As for the study of Josephus in particular, it seems that the main development in Hebrew scholarship of the 1980s came in a several publications by Menahem Stern, studies that focused on Josephus's *Jewish War* and, in two ways, took Hebrew scholarship back to the 1920s and, more or less, to the position already taken by Simchoni. First, Stern detailed and emphasized the literary qualities of *Jewish War* in a way no one had done before him in Hebrew literature, placing the work in the first rank not only of ancient Jewish literature but also of literature in general in Josephus's day. For example:

It can be seen as an almost perfect example of Greek historiographical composition in the era of the Roman Empire ... It is highly doubtful that any of the other Jewish-Hellenistic writers can compare to the author of the *War* with regard to his skill in historical description. Indeed, in the first century of our era, after the days of Augustus, we cannot point to any Greek historian whose writing can compare to the power of Josephus's writing in the *War* ...

(Stern 1991, 379)

That was published just as Stern was making similar statements elsewhere in the same decade (such as in Rappaport 1983, 94), and the way people are, it is nigh impossible to maintain such a panegyric evaluation of the *Jewish War*'s literary quality along with a very negative moral estimation of its author. It is, therefore, not surprising to find Stern emphasizing, time and again, that Josephus was not enthusiastic about Rome but only surrendered to it. Indeed, Stern underlines that, contrary to other contemporary works, one cannot find, in all of the *Jewish War*'s anti-rebellion speeches, anything praising Rome for bringing civilization and progress to the world it conquered. Thus, for example, concerning Agrippa II's anti-war speech, a central piece in *Jewish War* 2 (2.345–401), Stern comments as follows:

Agrippa's words, as Josephus transmits them, express the recognition that Rome's power is invincible: No one—and certainly not the Jews—has a chance to resist it successfully. What is completely absent from Agrippa's speech, as well as from the entire *War*, is any acknowledgment of the

Roman Empire's achievements in bringing civilization and benefits to the peoples subjected to its rule—the *pax romana* that promises the existence, and prosperity, of all of the inhabitants of the Empire. The failure to relate to the real benefits that imperial rule brought the population of the provinces is noteworthy in comparison to what was usual in Greek cities and what was expressed in the famed speech of the Roman general, Cerialis, meant to prevent rebellion in Gaul [Tacitus, *Histories* 4.73–74]—but especially in comparison to the admiration of Rome's accomplishments in Philo's *Embassy to Gaius* and even in talmudic literature.

(Stern 1991, 384–385; see also 373 and 398)

So it happened that the same generation that was witness to the weakening of the type of ideological tension that had made it natural to denounce and even abominate Josephus as a “traitor,” the generation in which two frustrating, inconclusive, and painful wars sowed doubt about the ability of the few to prevail against the many, and the years which saw detailed studies of the Hasmonean wars and the Bar Kochva rebellion cast further doubt on that sanguine thesis, was also witness to a rehabilitation of Josephus as a Jew and high praise for him as a writer of *Jewish War*, the work that had earlier supplied most of the fuel for the indictment and excoriation of Josephus as a traitor. This rehabilitation basically confirmed Simchoni's main claims in the 1920s: Josephus should not be seen as a traitor because he did not love Rome and did not justify it but only recognized its supremacy (Simchoni 1968 [1923], 12), and *Jewish War* should be appreciated as a major literary accomplishment (Simchoni 1968 [1923], 20–25). Stern's assessments carried weight, moreover, not only because he was widely accepted as Israel's foremost scholar of the Second Temple period, but also because it was evident that they did not come from a stance that could be defined or rejected as “left-wing” or “post-Zionist” (as is so often the case in Israel), if only because of the fact that it came hand in hand with a refusal to give up anything of the heroism of those who chose the opposite path: in a move rather surprising in scholarly writing, in several publications Stern wrapped the suicides of Masada together with those of the Jewish victims of the First Crusade and the martyrs of York (1190), referring to them all quite reverently (Stern 1991, 285, 309, 311, and 338–339). He positioned Josephus in contrast to them not as a traitor but, rather, as flesh and blood and a realist.

29.6 The 1990s: The Rise of *Against Apion*

The 1990s witnessed a sharp shift in Hebrew scholarship on Josephus. If until now we have dealt, in this survey, only with Josephus's *Jewish War*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Life*, and have not even mentioned *Against Apion*, in the 1990s it became that work's turn to take center stage as the prime ancient

work that could nourish scholarship about what the ancient Greeks and Romans thought about Jews and Judaism. To a large extent this was, for Hebrew scholarship, a response to the appearance of Stern's *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (1974–1984), and to numerous works that appeared in its wake, both on the general theme (such as Feldman 1993; Schäfer 1997) and on *Against Apion* in particular (Gerber 1997; Feldman and Levison 1996). This scholarly orientation yielded important Hebrew fruit as well: one can point to Moshe Amit's essay on the Jews and the Greeks as two worlds that did not meet (Amit 1996), at Israel Shatzman's painstaking study of the image of the Hasmoneans in the eyes of Gentiles (Shatzman 1991/92), at Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev's study on the Jews in Roman eyes (Ben Zeev 1989), at a whole series of Hebrew articles by Bezalel Bar-Kochva (which eventually served as the basis for Bar-Kochva 2010), and at a massive new annotated Hebrew translation of *Against Apion* (Kasher 1996)—a work that naturally gave a great push to the study of that work, reminiscent of the way Schalit's translation gave such a boost to *Jewish Antiquities* in the 1940s. Since, however, it is too early to have the perspective necessary to characterize work of the past two decades, I will merely point to the phenomenon and conclude this survey here.

29.7 Conclusion

That which the ancient rabbis asserted with regard to Jerusalem and Caesarea, that “if someone says both are destroyed, do not believe it; or that both are flourishing, do not believe it; but if he says that Caesarea is destroyed and Jerusalem is flourishing, or that Jerusalem is destroyed and Caesarea is flourishing—believe it” (Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 6a), may aptly be applied aptly to Masada and Jotapata. Namely, if the third decade of the twentieth century saw two opposing attitudes to Josephus weighing in, with Simchoni's introduction to *Jewish War* at one pole and Lamdan's “*Masada*” at the other, this schematic article has sketched the development of Hebrew scholarship on Josephus since then: after a long period during which the survivor of Jotapata was denounced and the suicides of Masada were lionized as heroes, things have turned around nearly completely, to a period of reservations about the Masada story—historically, politically, and morally. Despite various protests (such as Meshel 1995/96), it has become common, in Israel, to refer to “the Masada Myth” (see Bitan 1990; Ben-Yehuda 1995), and no matter how sophisticated people are in their treatment of myths, this reorientation undermines the status of those whom Josephus himself presented as having chosen a heroic path so different from his own at Jotapata.

As we have seen, some of the factors that contributed to the development were from the world of scholarship itself, such as the publication of

translations of *Jewish Antiquities* in the 1940s, archaeological discoveries from the 1940s (Qumran) to the 1960s (Masada), and the growing tendency to see historiography as literature and, accordingly, not to condemn historians merely because they have their own agendas and deviate from “what really happened.” Others, however, derive from the world at large, and the Israeli context in particular: especially we pointed to the roles played by the Zionist struggle against the British Mandate from the 1920s to the 1940s, the Holocaust, and Israel’s difficult and inconclusive wars of the 1970s and 1980s. All this eventually allowed Jotapata to rise as Masada declined, and Simchoni’s position, which acquitted Josephus from the charge of betrayal and even glorified him as a skilled historian and writer, came to be accepted, and was further articulated by Stern. Historians are scholars and professionals, but they also live in the real world, and those involved in Hebrew scholarship concerning Josephus, during the period surveyed in this article, were clearly no exception.

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CHAPTER 30

Josephus Comicus in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and *History of the World, Part 1*

Honora Howell Chapman

30.1 Introduction

Scholars now more than ever are attuned to the literary nature of Josephus's four extant works that blend Greek and Roman historiographic techniques with a Judean interpretation of historical events. Northrop Frye provides a lucid explanation of how literature in general tends to represent the wide range of human experiences:

In literature there are two great organizing patterns. One is the natural cycle itself; the other, a final separation between an idealized and happy world and a horrifying or miserable one. Comedy moves in the general direction of the former, and traditionally closes in some such formula as "They lived happily ever after." Tragedy moves in the opposite direction, and toward the complementary formula "Count no man happy until he is dead." The moral effect of literature is normally bound up with the assumption that we prefer to identify ourselves with the happy world and detach ourselves from the wretched one. The record of history, in itself, does not indicate this: it indicates that man is quite as enthusiastic about living in hell as in heaven. To see misery as tragic, as a destroyed and perverted form of greatness and splendor, is a primary achievement of Greek literature. The Bible's vision of misery is ironic rather than tragic, but the same dialectical separation of the two worlds is quite as strongly marked.

(Frye 1982, 73)

Given the serious nature of Josephus's account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the death or enslavement of so many Jews in his *Judean War*, it is no surprise that one thinks 'tragedy' when analyzing his literary representation of these events (*War* 1.9–12; Chapman 1998), and as Steve Mason (2005) has shown, there is also a heavy dose of irony to be found. On the other hand, Josephus's works also plant the seeds for a reading of episodes in Judean history that resemble 'comedy' as well (Price with Ullmann 2002).

In the Greek tradition, these tragic and comic literary patterns had their genesis in Homer. In his treatment of tragedy from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages, Henry Kelly cites Aelius Donatus, a fourth-century grammarian, as claiming Homer to be the progenitor of both genres, “Homer, who is the most abundant source of nearly every kind of poetry ... made his *Iliad* to be like a tragedy, and the *Odyssey* after the fashion of a comedy” (Kelly 1993, 12). When Josephus addresses his patron Epaphroditus in the preface to his *Judean Antiquities*, the historian alludes to Homer’s hero Odysseus when he labels Epaphroditus’s fortunes “*polutropois*” (*Ant.* 1.8); here we find Epaphroditus playing the role of Odysseus at the outset of Homer’s epic (*Odyssey* 1.1: “*polutropon*”) and presumably enjoying an implied happy ending, as found in both the *Odyssey* and comedy in general, since he is alive and sufficiently prosperous to become a named addressee of not only Josephus’s *magnum opus*, but also its autobiographical appendix (*Life* 430; see [Chapter 3](#) by Mason on *Life* in this volume) and *Against Apion* as well (*Apion* 1.1, 2.1 and 296; see [Chapter 4](#) by Barclay in this volume). Likewise, Josephus depicts himself displaying Odysseus’s wily survival instincts at Jotapata in *Judean War* 3 and in the retelling of his deeds as a general in his *Life* (Mader 2000, 1). In a later rendition of these events (Cassius Dio 65.1.4), Josephus literally “laughed” after he was captured by the Romans (a detail not found in *War*) and then predicted that his release would occur when Vespasian became emperor (cf. *War* 3.401), thus setting up a happy ending for everyone involved—and perhaps indicating that Cassius Dio sees the comic arc inherent in the situation. Furthermore, Josephus spins the tale of his adult career using the same device found later in opera and movies whereby “a comedy ends in marriage” (La Salle 2012): his *Life* concludes with a penultimate note that he divorced his ‘bad’ Alexandrian wife by whom he had one surviving son and subsequently married a socially prominent Jewish woman from Crete who gave him two sons (*Life* 426–428). Josephus, it seems, lived happily ever after also, despite all his self-reported trials and tribulations.

It is fitting, then, that when modern filmmakers seek a comical angle on the life and times of Jesus, they rely in part (and indirectly) on the writings of Josephus, since his are far and away the most vivid and complete extant sources for first-century Judean history. These Josephan texts, accessed by filmmakers mostly through modern retellings, are not only rich in serious historical material that can serve as a corroborating backdrop for biblical and non-canonical sources, but they are also ripe with potential for mockery, much as Fox News provides fodder for American comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. Though most films treating first-century Roman encounters with the Jews (and Jesus) tend to be pious and lugubrious, and thus in the tragic vein (despite the fact that Jesus does resurrect from the dead, the ultimate triumph of comedy over tragedy), two stand out for their levity and resonance with the works of Josephus: *Monty Python’s Life of Brian (of Nazareth)* (1979) and *History of the World, Part 1* (1981).

30.2 Fictional Romans and Judeans in Film

For a bit of academic comic relief, we can consult Wikipedia, which features a page with a “List of fictional Romans.” It includes the very legitimate sub-categories of Roman citizens, Roman provincials, and Roman slaves, leading one to believe that it was created by a graduate student trying to procrastinate from writing a dissertation. The site’s contributors have included Marcus Vinicius and Lygia from *Quo Vadis* (though only from the 1951 film, and not the 1896 novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz), as well as the world’s most famous fictional Judean, Judah Ben Hur, whose provenance they correctly attribute to Lew Wallace’s 1880 novel; the films (on silent versions, see Michelakis and Wyke 2013) based on these serious and pious blockbuster novels foreshadow the comic arc of our two comedies under consideration in that both conclude with relatively happy endings for at least some of the main characters, who survive and look toward a brighter future. Brian Cohen of Nazareth and Biggus Diccus from *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* also make the fictional Romans list, as does Josephus the Ethiopian slave from Mel Brooks’s *History of the World, Part 1*. These two films are, in fact, the only truly comic representations of the first-century historian Josephus or his writings on the big screen. The former film was far more successful ultimately than the latter, while both reflect the political, social, and religious tensions of their day, the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Scholarship examining the reception of ancient Rome in modern film tends to focus on dramas instead of comedies, though Nicholas Cull briefly observes in a chapter focusing mostly on *Carry on Cleo* (1964):

Part of the attraction of jokes about ancient Rome had always been their proximity to the forbidden subject of the Bible. In 1979, Britain’s Monty Python team broke the taboo of joking directly about the Bible with their *Life of Brian*. It recycled many of the same approaches as *Cleo*, including the past/present collisions, jokes about Latin classes, and numerous puns based on Roman names. The religious dimension also figured in the Roman sequence of Mel Brooks’s *History of the World Part One*.

(Cull 2001, 184)

Furthermore, Monica Cyrino devotes fine individual chapters to *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* and *History of the World, Part 1* in her recent book (2005, 176–193 and 194–206); her analysis, however, does not delve into the intertextuality between these films and the writings of Josephus, mentioning them only once briefly with respect to the deeds of Pontius Pilate (180). In *Hollywoods Traum von Rom*, Marcus Junkelmann weaves together the forerunners of Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator* (2000) and observes with originality that René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo’s *Asterix* comic books, which first

appeared in 1959, preceded the parody found in *Life of Brian* (Junkelmann 2004, 111). Alastair Blanshard and Kim Shahabudin (2011, 172–190) explain how *Life of Brian* satirizes epic films, British class structure, and fanatical religious beliefs in general, and though they cover the making of the film in some detail, they provide no insight on ancient sources for the film’s material. In his “*Life of Brian* Research,” Philip Davies (1998) provides an in-depth discussion of factionalism and the Masada scene from Josephus’s *Judean War*, as well as New Testament, rabbinic, and christological resonances found in the Monty Python film. The present chapter will build upon Davies’ findings for *Life of Brian* and will incorporate an analysis of *History of the World, Part I*, a nearly contemporary film.

30.3 Reactions to *Life of Brian*

When *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* first came out in the United States in August 1979, it inspired protests from an ironically ecumenical group of religious leaders. Robert Hewison reports that the President of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, Rabbi Benjamin Hecht, said, “This film is so grievously insulting that we are genuinely concerned that its continued showing could result in violence ... I have an idea that it was produced in Hell” (Hewison 1981, 78). Christian preachers also excoriated it, claiming it was a blasphemous attempt to ridicule the life of Jesus and advising church members not to see it; meanwhile, Hewison adds, “The Roman Catholic Office for Film rated *Brian* ‘C’ for condemned, making it a sin to see the film” (Hewison 1981, 79). The staunchly Christian Dixiecrat Senator Strom Thurmond made sure that it was banned from his home state of South Carolina, leading to public protests of censorship (Jones et al. 2009). George Perry (1995, 162) observes, “Not until the appearance of Martin Scorsese’s serious film *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1988 was so much hot air in the name of religion spouted on both sides of the Atlantic.”

In the United Kingdom, blasphemy (Nash 2007) was even more serious than in the United States because one could be charged with blasphemous libel, as had happened to the poet James Kirkup only three years before. His poem “The Love That Dares To Speak Its Name,” which includes a sexual encounter between a necrophilic Roman centurion and Jesus, had been published in June 1976 in the *Gay News*, a newspaper that Graham Chapman, who later played Brian, had originally helped fund. Hewison reports that when Kirkup was charged with blasphemous libel, Python put up some of the money for his defense (1981, 62). This is the religious and legal climate in which Monty Python created *Life of Brian*, the most irreverent film ever made about the life and times of people living in first-century Judea, including Jesus of Nazareth.

In fact, the film could have been much more shocking than it was. In 1973, Morton Smith had published *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark*. The text that he had discovered in a Greek monastery contains an initiation scene between Jesus and Lazarus that some interpreted to be a sexual one, as in Kirkup's 1976 poem. Had Graham Chapman *really* wanted to cause trouble he could have portrayed Brian as homosexual (as was Chapman in real life), but in the film he takes up with the rebel Judith. (Incidentally, Chapman was not Jewish, so when they shot the scene with full frontal nudity, he had to rubber band his penis to imitate circumcision, a key mark of male Jewish identity.)

Almost two decades after *Life of Brian* first appeared on the big screen, Philip Davies published a scholarly chapter in which he stated, "Josephus's portrait [of competing elements during the war] is substantially reproduced in *Life of Brian*" (1998, 403). The movie does, in fact, brilliantly blend the political, social, and religious tensions—especially the factionalism—that we find described in the works of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus with the career of Jesus as depicted in the Christian gospels (see [Chapter 9](#) by Bond in this volume). The genius of the makers of *Life of Brian* was their ability to meld their reading and understanding of Josephus's texts (most likely mediated through secondary sources), the Christian literature, and even the Dead Sea Scrolls, with their own interpretation of the failures of modern established Christian religion, society, and politics, along with random pop culture thrown in just to keep the audience on its toes and amused. And they did this as a *comedy*, having observed that no one had ever made a funny Biblical film—at least not intentionally (Jones et al. 2009).

30.4 Python *Paideia*

Anyone who has seen Socrates lead his Greek philosophers to victory over the German philosophers in a soccer match, a scene now found in the *Parrot Sketch Not Included* collection, knows that the players of Monty Python were very well educated at Oxford and Cambridge, though it is funny to note that Graham Chapman admitted that he "felt inferior" for having gone to Cambridge (Cleese et al. 2003, 282). While drinking in a bar in Amsterdam during the promotion of their film *Holy Grail*, Eric Idle came up with a title for yet another Christian-themed film, *Jesus Christ—Lust for Glory*, and though the title had to go, the Pythons started brainstorming. Idle explained later:

We all got together and talked about it a little bit and said, 'Let's do a couple weeks' research.' So we all went off and read the Bible, and I read the Dead Sea Scrolls and books on the Bible. Then we met again and decided what this could be about. I think we realized at this point we

couldn't make a film about Jesus Christ, because he's not particularly funny, what he's saying isn't mockable, it's very decent stuff, you can't take the piss out of it. But the idea of somebody who is mistaken for a Messiah came out and I think that's how the process started.

(Cleese et al. 2003, 279)

After this research, they then wisely chose Barbados as a fine place to write a script, and Michael Palin recorded in his diary entry for 7 January 1978 that they were “wondering whether to set up a preparatory school” there (Cleese et al. 2003, 283).

In case anyone should doubt the Pythons' studiousness, one only needs to look at the recent book that accompanied the BBC2 show Terry Jones' *Barbarians*, which surveys the history and contribution of all sorts of 'barbarians' of the ancient world, such as Celts, Dacians, and Persians. The Oxford-trained Jones has thought long and hard about the consequences of the Roman conquest and control of far-flung lands. As he says in the Introduction:

Our interest in Rome lies less in what these people [the 'barbarians'] did to the Empire than in what the Empire did to them. And since 'they' are actually the people who created the world we live in, this becomes quite literally a question of 'What did the Romans ever do for us?' The answer, as you will have already figured, is not usually very nice.

(Jones and Ereira 2006, 8)

This most important question on the effects of Romanization from *Life of Brian*, posed originally during the scene of the rebels planning the kidnapping of Pilate's wife so that Pilate will “dismantle the entire apparatus of the Roman Imperialist State” in two days (Chapman et al. 1979, 27), continues to echo in serious scholarship (e.g., Goodman 2007).

30.5 Rebel Bandits, Messiahs, and Prophets

What Jones and the other Pythons gleaned correctly from their research into extra-biblical materials, including Josephus or secondary sources derived from his texts, is that rebel groups (with their irrational hatred towards one another easily as virulent as what they felt towards the Romans) sprouted like mushrooms in Judea and its environs, that prophets seemed to be a dime a dozen, especially as war with Rome loomed large, and that Jesus was hardly the only man in the first century taken to be a messiah, the long-awaited anointed king who would lead Israel to self-rule. These bandits, prophets, and messiahs—to borrow the title of Horsley's book, which came out after the film—are characters we learn of mostly from the texts of Josephus. The movie *Life of Brian* maps these various individuals and groups from the revolt that

begin in 66 C.E. back onto the time of Jesus' career over 30 years before.

From reading Josephus, one gets the impression that rebellious bandits were crawling the Judean countryside, and that those who wished for Rome-sanctioned power in that part of the world, such as Herod the Great and his father Antipater, found forceful ways to quell banditry and uprisings (*War* 1.201–205). When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.E., right around the time that Jesus was born, bandits morphed into messiahs overnight with aspirations of kingship, such as one Judas, son of the brigand-chief Ezekias, who took a stockpile of arms from the royal palace of Herod at Sepphoris and tried to lead a rebellion (*Ant.* 17.271–272). When other pretender-kings also started to lead rebel armies in the area, the Romans called in legions from Syria under the governor Varus, and these soldiers then burnt down Sepphoris and eventually mopped up the various uprisings. Sepphoris is only a few miles from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, and the second-century pagan philosopher Celsus (whose words are found excerpted in Origen's Christian rebuttal of Celsus) argued that a Jew might ask Jesus: "Is it not the case that when her [Mary's] deceit was discovered, to wit, that she was pregnant by a Roman soldier named Panthera she was driven away by her husband—the carpenter—and convicted of adultery?" (Hoffmann 1987, 57). Christians may find such a charge outlandish and offensive, but Sawicki (2000, 192) has remarked that this gossip might be a reflection of the memory of women being raped when the Roman legions came through to put down the rebellion. That Monty Python found a way to portray Brian's mother The Virgin Mandy humorously as one of these women, and Brian as the son who refuses to believe such horrible news, is truly remarkable given the heinous nature of the historical events.

Moreover, Mandy provides a clue that Monty Python had been exposed to details from the siege of Jerusalem in Josephus's *Judean War*. She nostalgically recollects to her son: "Nortius Maximus his name was ... promised me the known world he did ... I was to be taken to Rome ... House by the Forum ... slaves ... asses' milk ... as much gold as I could eat..." (Chapman et al. 1979, 18). Recounted inside their hovel, Mandy's tale of her lost future sounds as grand as Cleopatra's until we hit her eating gold, an odd detail one could easily miss. Yet this 'luxury' reflects the agony of the besieged Jews who tried to escape Jerusalem in 70 C.E. by sneaking out after having eaten their gold for safekeeping (*War* 5.421). Sadly, these refugees were caught by the Roman-allied Arabs and Syrians, who, after discovering their trick, slaughtered them by slicing their bellies to get the gold (*War* 5.551). For an audience unaware of this historical event, Mandy's musings simply sound funny, just as was her sudden interest in the Wise Men's gold right after Brian was born (Chapman et al. 1979, 3).

The prophets in *Life of Brian*, however, have some of the funniest costumes and lines, calling into question divine inspiration and human hermeneutics.

When Terry Jones, who plays Brian's mother Mandy, shouts to the crowd hounding Brian, "He's not the Messiah, he's a very naughty boy. Now go away" (Chapman et al. 1979, 71), the viewer realizes that she, The Virgin Mandy, a "ratbag" according to the script notes, is the very voice of reason while the prophets, the supposed voices of God, merely rant. One of these prophets, the "False Prophet," has a name straight from Josephus (*War* 6.285–287), who in contrast styled himself a genuine prophet by predicting that Vespasian would become emperor (*War* 3.399–408 and Suetonius, *Vespasian* 5.6; another true prophet: *War* 6.300–309; Gray 1993; see [Chapter 7](#) by Spilsbury in this volume). The Pythons, however, make their False Prophet's predictions much more humorous with a peculiar blend of lines from the movie *Holy Grail* and the biblical books of Daniel (7:7–8) and Revelation (13:11–18): "And he shall bear a nine-bladed sword. Nine-bladed. Not two. Or five or seven, but nine, which he shall wield on all wretched sinners and that includes you, sir, and the horns shall be on the head ..." (Chapman et al. 1979, 45). Then they pile on the "Blood and Thunder Prophet" and the "Boring Prophet," who babbles about a friend's hammer, in order to increase the madness (Chapman et al. 1979, 44–45). Brian's later attempt to disengage his followers by proclaiming them all "individuals" directly takes a whack at sheepish religious conformity and blind faith, modes of behavior and thought that the social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s sought to undermine, or at least transform (Borstelmann 2011, 70–71 on *Life of Brian*, and 227–77 on religion and hyper-individualism). In a published oral history, Terry Jones claims that this scene is heretical and that "[t]he whole things about 'The sandal!' 'It's a shoe!' is like a history of the Church in three minutes," but John Cleese responds that he never understood it to be heresy and that they were "quite clearly making fun of the way people follow religion but not of religion itself, and the whole purpose of having that lovely scene at the start when the Three Wise Men go to the wrong stable is to say Brian is not Christ, he just gets taken for the Messiah" (Morgan 1999, 247).

It is the Josephan milieu combined with contemporary radicalism that the Pythons bring to life as Brian falls in with a group of rebels at the amphitheater when trying to sell them vile snacks such as "larks' tongues" that sound like they come out of the nastiest pages of Apicius's cookbook (Chapman et al. 1979, 19 ff.). When the rebel leader Reg of the People's Front of Judea tells Brian that "The only people we hate more than the Romans ... are the fucking Judean People's Front," and then they all yell at the lone "splitter" member of yet another rival faction, the Popular Front (Chapman et al. 1979, 24), we hear an echo of not only the ludicrously similar and difficult-to-remember political party/revolutionary names of the 1970s but also the rebel groups of ancient Judea, whose identities are still debated by scholars with their confusion over Sicarii vs. Zealots vs. the Fourth Philosophy, as well as their differing opinions about Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes (e.g., Brighton 2009; Atkinson and Magness 2010; Davies 1998; *War* 7.252–274

neatly sums up the factions and their methods). One former communist and member of Monty Python said in a recent documentary that this scene in the amphitheater about the splitters “should have ended communism right there” (Jones et al. 2009).

The film also explores gender identity with the rebel Stan wanting to become a woman, and though Reg mocks him for not having a womb, Judith encourages the other members of the People’s Front of Judea to declare Stan’s right nevertheless to identify as a woman. As Borstelmann explains about the early 1970s,

Instead, for the first time, gender—the social and cultural roles associated with a particular sex—became a crucial and widely used term, as millions of women and men began to reconsider all sorts of previously unexamined assumptions about femaleness and maleness.

(2011, 73)

In Josephus’s *War*, however, this kind of gender-bending would have put one firmly in the camp of the “impure” cross-dressing Galilean rebels in Jerusalem (*War* 4.558–563; for more on John of Gischala and his men, see [Chapters 1, 3 and 5](#) by Mason in this volume; on women, see [Chapter 12](#) by Ilan in this volume).

Also, the use of the amphitheater as a setting is a masterful touch, as Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities* verifies that one did exist in Jerusalem. The script sets the scene: “A huge Roman amphitheatre sparsely attended. There is a large group of ROMANS, but hardly any crowd” (Chapman et al. 1979, 19). This is excellent, since we learn from Josephus that Jews were not very fond of the amphitheater Herod built nor of killing as entertainment because “it was a clear departure from their honored customs ... for it was clearly impious to throw humans to wild beasts for the pleasure of spectators” (*Ant.* 15.268 and 275; Feldman 1993, 26; Mishnah, *Abodah Zarah* 1.7); thus, the empty seating in this scene in the movie is all the more realistic (see Weiss 2014, 195–226, for the evolution of late antique Jewish attitudes). This mix of the genuine big historical picture with ridiculous small details like wrens’ livers for sale is what makes this film so brilliant—in fact, far more brilliant than the earnestly translated scenes in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of The Christ*. And when you think about it, *Life of Brian* is also much more humane in its well-aimed jabs towards death as spectacle, whether in the arena or on the cross, than Gibson’s sadistic portrayal of Jesus’ torture before his crucifixion (which eerily was on the big screen in Spring 2004 at the same time that the world became aware of the torture perpetrated at Abu Ghraib).

30.6 Rebel Graffiti

One only wishes, however, that the Pythons had also looked at their old Latin grammar books—the way Mel Gibson’s script consultants did—when writing the hilarious scene of Brian painting graffiti on “Pilate’s palace.” This is a really glorious spoof of the first-century Roman governor Agricola’s desire to spread Latin to the Britons as a civilizing force (Tacitus, *Agricola* 21.2). The script explains: “When he reaches the foot of the high wall, he starts painting on it in pathetically small letters—‘*Romanes Eunt Domus*’” (Chapman et al. 1979, 25). The centurion catches him and delivers the famous Latin lesson straight out of an abusive British schoolroom (see Appendix for full text). Unfortunately, anyone who teaches Latin knows that *domi* is the locative of *domus*, not *domum*, and that one would not use the locative case—the case used for place *at* which, as in ‘at home’—for motion *towards* home, but at least *domum*, here without the preposition *ad*, is correct for the accusative of place to which. It is possible that the Pythons knew this but that they also remembered so well the seeming idiocy of learning things like the locative case as scared 8-year-olds that they had to mention it in this scene, even if it was wrong (see Campbell 1968, 318 on social prestige and Latin in mid-1960s England). Or perhaps these things simply blur when writing a script on Barbados while drinking cocktails. What matters most, of course, is that we see the anti-imperialist message in a humorous light. The fact that instead of making Brian paint over his rebellious words, the Roman centurion insists that he “write it out a hundred times” to get it right, the punishment of schoolchildren everywhere, only highlights the stupidity of anally-retentive teachers—and of imperialists who forget that armies cannot always subdue insurgents.

The Python cast did wonder how the scene would play with Americans who had never learnt Latin (Jones et al. 2009). Perhaps they underestimated the prevalence of schoolroom abuse in America or the (temporary) general distaste for U.S. imperialism after the Vietnam War. One can also note that the casting of this film with British actors to play various Romans and Jews differs from Hollywood’s practice of representing the ancient world via nationality. As David Eldridge explains:

More generally, epics such as *Ben Hur* conventionally cast British actors as the ancient Romans, and Americans as Hebrews or other ‘freedom fighters’, allowing echoes of ‘a highly simplified rendering of the American Revolution’ to permeate narratives that concerned earlier struggles against imperial oppression.

(Eldridge 2006, 203)

As for the graffiti itself, Josephus does not report in the *War* that Jewish rebels wrote on the walls of the Antonia fortress, since in his texts they are usually doing more serious things—robbery, kidnapping, assassination, burning food supplies, etc.—but given what we have found at archaeological sites

elsewhere, such as the basilica in Pompeii (e.g., *CIL* 4.1904, which marvels that the wall still stands after holding so much graffiti), it could very well have happened in ancient Jerusalem, too. During times of civic unrest under foreign occupation, such public scribblings tend to proliferate, as we see from modern Iraq and the graffiti collected from Baghdad's various neighborhoods:

USA + UK PLEASE STAY

IRAQIS RISE AND RESIST THE OCCUPATION!

A CURSE OF GOD ON THE AMERICANS AND SADDAM
TOGETHER!

A CURSE OF GOD ON THE AMERICANS AND SADDAM AND
BRITISH AND RUSSIANS AND JAPANESE AND FRENCH AND
ITALIANS AND LONG LIFE FOR IRAQ AND ISLAM ONLY

(Stevenson 2004)

But in Iraq, as in ancient Judea, the hatred is hardly reserved just for the occupying army but is also aimed at the "splitters." Consider this fine pair of thoughts:

GLORY FOR ISLAM'S MARTYRS, SUNNI AND SHIITE—Muqtada
al-Sadr

Underneath is written:

AND GO TO HELL ALL OTHER SECTS? SHOULD OTHER SECTS
BECOME THIEVES AND KILLERS LIKE YOUR FOLLOWERS IN
ORDER TO DESERVE TO BE CALLED MARTYRS.

(Stevenson 2004)

These are sentiments straight out of Josephus's ancient Judea: martyrdom and sectarian violence rolled into one to create civil war in response to foreign military occupation. One member of Monty Python, perhaps with post-9/11 hindsight, argued about the film, "It's not really about Jesus; it's about prejudice, religion, and terrorists" (Jones et al. 2009; on the Irish Republican Army, see Jones 2002 and below). Just two years before 9/11, Eric Idle had explained, "So it is really an attack on Churches and pontificators and self-righteous assholes who claim to speak for God, of whom there are still too many on the planet" (Morgan 1999, 226).

30.7 Martyrdom and Zionism

Martyrdom is such a touchy subject: it seems so noble and self-empowering to those engaged in it, while it seems positively foolish and self-destructive to everyone else, including the authorities who are being defied (Droge and

Tabor 1992; Plass 1995; van Henten and Avemarie 2002). Would the historical Pontius Pilate (played by Michael Palin with a speech disorder) really have cared one iota about the death of some scraggly rebels? Hardly, even if it was 140 in one day, “a nice wound number” (Chapman et al. 1979, 79). Palin explained that he wanted the historical context to guide their comedy, “The historical background is that Jesus’ crucifixion was not a unique event, it was part of a regular entertainment that was put on by the Romans to both impress their power and authority and to entertain people” (Morgan 1999, 227). Josephus reports that Roman soldiers “as a joke” used to crucify Jewish prisoners of war in a variety of positions during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.—so many of them, in fact, that they ran out of places for crosses and crosses for bodies (*War* 5.451; Chapman 2005)!

Crucifixion could, indeed, become a joke, and when *Life of Brian* ends with the epicurean song “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life,” one can’t help but whistle along, even if one is Brian, the man who never intended to become a messiah or a martyr. Instead, his rebel ‘friends’ have sold him out to make a statement about their cause, leaving him to die (Chapman et al. 1979, 96–101). After the *Spartacus*-inspired moment of all the people on the crosses shouting “I’m Brian!” has denied Brian of any hope of being taken down—a clever comic inversion of the purported power of Marxist revolution (Malamud 2009, 213–225 on the scene in *Spartacus*)—what’s left for him to do but to “give a whistle”? After all, he has just seen a squad of rebels dressed as Japanese Samurai race up and commit suicide right before his very eyes in a completely nonsensical waste of human lives. One could imagine this as a joke on the ending of Akira Kurosawa’s 1954 film *Seven Samurai* with the villagers singing, but Eric Idle explains that he composed and sang the now famous song in a hotel room in Tunisia during the shooting of the film, hoping to mimic a “whistley, cheery” song, “like a Disney song” (Jones et al. 2009). After an interviewer noted that the crew of a sinking British destroyer sang this song as they awaited rescue during the Falklands/Maldives War in 1982, Michael Palin remarked that Idle’s tune reflects, “All those aspects of Britishness that we’ve seen in wartime films and on stage, the chirpy Brit coping with life through terrible adverse situations” (Morgan 1999, 253).

It is possible that this final scene, and the general mockery of factionalism in *Life of Brian*, is a dig at the Irish Republican Army (and its splinter groups such as the Irish National Liberation Army), which sought the removal of British rule from Northern Ireland especially during the 1970s. The film was banned in the Republic of Ireland until 1987, but it was viewed in first release in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, though not in Belfast (Hewison 1981, 90). Coincidentally, ten days after the film premiered in the United States, the IRA assassinated Lord Mountbatten and three others in Ireland as well as 18 British soldiers in Northern Ireland in two bombings.

The suicidal impulse of Judean rebels in *Life of Brian* has its basis in the story

of Masada, which only Josephus tells in the last book of his *Judean War* (*War* 7.252–406; Yadin 1965; Davies 1998; Chapman 2007). This dark but ultimately inspiring moment for the modern State of Israel, especially when the archaeological dig was first revealing its finds (Yadin 1965, 201–3; see [Chapter 29](#) by Schwartz on Hebrew scholarship in this volume), became a target of Monty Python’s wicked humor, and the final scene almost makes no sense unless you know Josephus’s text. It would have helped the film’s narrative clarity if they had not deleted a scene explaining this suicide squad and its insane leader Otto, who dreams of invading Samaria and putting the Samaritans “in little camps” and who awaits “the Leader who will save Israel by ridding it of the scum of non-Jewish people, making it pure, no foreigners, no gypsies, no riff-raff” (Chapman et al. 1979, 74–75), a thinly veiled conflation of Hitler’s policies in the 1930s and Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the 1970s. Hewison explains that “the Jewish-Nazi Otto raised more sensitive issues, where the satire on contemporary Zionism, making the point that fascism and racism can exist anywhere, was bound to cause problems with the Jewish lobby in the United States, particularly since the entertainment industry contains many Jewish executives” (Hewison 1981, 69). What Otto said was not only too outrageous, given the Holocaust, but his helmet with the Star of David melded to a swastika was totally obnoxious. Eric Idle, who played Otto, was wise to suggest that the scene be cut. Perhaps as a result, Hewison reports that the film played in Israel “without comment” (1981, 92).

30.8 History of the World, Part 1

Growing up a poor Jewish kid in Brooklyn, Mel Brooks never really took to his studies, unlike the Python players, but after cutting his teeth in the Catskills, he enjoyed the same trajectory from television to film success. His less cerebral approach to comic filmmaking has kept *History of the World, Part 1* out of most in-depth analyses of films portraying antiquity (e.g., Malamud 2008; Llewellyn-Jones 2009; Cyrino 2005 is an exception), yet Brooks manages to address very serious American social issues of the 1950s to the present day through his films, including *History of the World, Part 1* from 1981.

For instance, as Mel Brooks himself says, “Take *Blazing Saddles*. It was about whether a black could survive in the good old West” (Parish 2007, 195). In this film, Brooks plays a Jewish Indian, in homage to the 1930 film *Whoopie!*, in which Eddie Cantor, Brooks’s idol (Parish 2007, 27–28), “meets an Indian chief, and the two have a comic exchange in which they recognize that Jews and Indians have much in common in America: both are the subjects of racism and oppression” (Malamud 2008, 181). This same sensitivity to the social underdog plays out in *History of the World, Part 1*. Though an erratic film at best, its Roman episode has a good-guy character named Josephus, played by Gregory Hines as an Ethiopian who is a “slave auction reject” (Crick 2002, 118 and 131). Bearing the name of the Jewish historian, this black Josephus represents two main groups who were inexorably linked in the civil rights movement in the United States and in the politics of the Democratic Party in general (Wayne 1980, 60). This only-in-America hybrid Josephus will tie the film’s horribly disjointed narrative together in the last scene by riding in like a knight in shining armor on a Roman chariot to save Mel Brooks’s character, Jacques/King Louis XVI, and his love interest and her father from the guillotine during the French Revolution.

No bookish resonances with the pages of Josephus play out in this film as in *Life of Brian*, but the Roman episode’s happy ending (with Mel Brooks’s Jewish-comedian character Comicus escaping Nero’s Rome with Josephus and the Vestal Virgin Miriam—note this perfectly Jewish name—to go to Judea) not only reflects Josephus’s travels in the 60s C.E. (*Life* 13–16), but it also sets up the film’s later comic rendering of the plight of Jews in the Inquisition scene (Friedman 1987, 236), as well as the Part 2 teaser trailers at the end of the film of Hitler on Ice and Jews in Space. In fact, despite the critics’ overall inability to see any unifying theme in this film (Crick 2002, 124), it is apparent that Brooks has chosen to highlight the role of Jews in history from Moses onward. Yet what he produces has none of the focus of D. W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* from 1916, which uses the long span of history to display “Love’s Struggle Throughout the Ages” (perhaps Brooks needed to

inject the equivalent of the shots of Lillian Gish rocking the cradle: a Jewish mother forcing her child to play the violin?). In any case, Brooks's conception of the span of history from the Stone Age to the Space Age does coincidentally reflect Josephus's retelling of Jewish history from the creation of the world to the outbreak of the Judean War of his own day in his *Judean Antiquities*. Yet none of the scholarship on Mel Brooks maintains that he consciously used Josephus as inspiration.

Brooks is not an erudite filmmaker, but his films' approach to comedy (and social justice) certainly entertains American audiences even today, and with a remarkably Jewish flair. As he told Mike Wallace in 2001, "Yes, I am a Jew. I am a Jew. What about it? What's so wrong? What's the matter with being a Jew? I think there's a lot of that way deep down beneath all the quick Jewish jokes that I do" (Parish 2007, 51). Maybe Mel Brooks and Josephus are not quite so far apart after all. And perhaps the very Jewishness of both is what keeps them mostly on the margins of scholarly studies on the reception of the classical world in film.

30.9 Epilogue

Life of Brian was re-released on April 30, 2004, at its twenty-fifth anniversary in the wake of the enormous success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, but no huge protests attended this round of public showings. At the end of 2009, political commentator Christopher Hitchens hailed *Life of Brian* "the single funniest movie ever made" (Hitchens 2009, 183). It is highly unlikely that Mel Brooks's *History of the World, Part 1* will ever be re-released nor will it ever be praised so highly, but the Inquisition scene enjoys an afterlife on YouTube.

Josephus as a source of comedy survives on the Internet in the irreverent Uncyclopedia web site, a spoof on Wikipedia begun in 2005. Here he is hailed as an "unhistorian" and the founder of "UnHistory," which is "the science that studies false and boring History and rescues the real and awesome UnHistory that always hides behind it." His full name is given as Josephus Flavour, and he is described as:

[T]he first child of Joseph and Putiphar's wife. Born in (incert random B.C. date here) as a jew, he converted to the roman darkside when noticed that nobody was going to survive and be able to tell the world, about the number of hot-dogs posts in the Jerusalem's Temple before its destruction, or the sexual rituals in the Sanctum Sanitarium. After finishing his First Book of UnHistory he realized his work wasn't over. Answering to the call of duty, Josephus founded the School of UnHistory to make sure that all the great and amusing events of Time, wont be forgotten just because they might have not actually happend. Among his most remarkable followers were Herodotus, Tukidides, Turkidudes, Sallustus, Poulus Johnson, Erikus Howsban and Dan Brown. Their Legacy became the pillars of both Wikipedia and Uncyclopedia.

(<http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/UnHistory>)

According to this site, among Josephus Flavour's "UnHistory Principles," one can find: "If History has many versions they are all wrong. Mix them or make your own one." It is no surprise that the historiographic technique of Josephus would end up the butt of Internet jokes given the multifaceted use (and abuse) of his texts over the centuries (Mason 2003), including the adaptations in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and *History of the World, Part 1*.

Appendix

Romanes Eunt Domus

CENTURION:

What's this then? 'Romanes Eunt Domus'? People called Romanes, they go the house.

BRIAN (*defiantly*):

It says 'Romans go home.'

CENTURION:

No it doesn't. What's Latin for Romans?

(*Slaps him.*) Come on...come on...

BRIAN

Romanus!

CENTURION:

Goes like?

BRIAN:

Er...annus.

CENTURION:

Vocative plural of annus is...(Tweaking BRIAN's hair.)

BRIAN:

Anni.

CENTURION:

Romani...(crossing out *Es* and substituting *I*)

(*Slaps BRIAN*)

'Eunt'? What's 'eunt'?

BRIAN:

Go...(He is shaken.) ...Er...

CENTURION:

Conjugate the verb to go.

BRIAN:

Ire...eo...is...it...imus...itis...eunt...

CENTURION:

So eunt is...?

BRIAN:

Third person plural present indicative. They go.

CENTURION:

But, 'Romans go home' is an order...so you must use...

BRIAN:

The imperative!!

CENTURION:

Which is...?

BRIAN:

Aaah...i...

CENTURION:

How many Romans?

BRIAN:

Plural! Plural! Ite!! Ite!!

CENTURION:

Ite...(Changes it.) Domus...what is domus?

BRIAN:

Er...

CENTURION:

Romans go home. This is motion towards, isn't it, boy?

BRIAN:

Dative, sir.

CENTURION (*drawing his sword and holding it to BRIAN's throat*):

Dative!

BRIAN:

No, not dative...

CENTURION:

...What?

BRIAN:

Er...accusative...er...domum...ad domum, sir.

CENTURION:

Except that domus takes the...?

BRIAN:

...Oh the locative...sir!

CENTURION:

Which is...

BRIAN:

Domum?

CENTURION:

So we have...Romani, ite domum. Do you understand?

BRIAN:

Yes, sir.

CENTURION:

Now write it out a hundred times.

BRIAN:

Yes, sir, hail Caesar, sir.

CENTURION:

Hail Caesar.

BRIAN:

Yes, sir.

CENTURION:

And if it isn't done by sunrise, I'll cut your balls off.

BRIAN:

Thank you, sir. Hail Caesar, sir, and everything, sir.

(*He starts writing it out.*)

(Chapman et al. 1979, 25–26)

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